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CALLIRHOË;

FAIR ROSAMUND.

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CALLIRRHÖE:

FAIR ROSAMUND.

BY

MICHAEL FIELD.



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1885



# CALLIRHOË.

A DRAMA.

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“To make the heart a spirit.”—*Childe Harold*,  
Canto iii., stanza 103.

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MICHAEL FIELD.



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## P R E F A C E.



BEFORE the bar of Time this poem pleads guilty to anachronism. The establishment in Greece of the worship of Dionysus reaches back into the dateless vistas of legend. The Author has so far defied Cronus, that he has represented this foreign cult struggling for recognition in the midst of a refined and even sceptical Hellas. Mighty voices excuse him, which have prevailed in silencing the accusations of "old Time"; he is their client. Euripides puts the language of a sophist in the lips of pre-historic heroes. Virgil makes Æneas and Dido contemporaries.

The Author would here remark that his account of the rise of the drama is purely imaginative and unhistorical.

The story of Callirrhoë is drawn from a classic source, but has never been raised from obscurity by ancient bard or dramatist. This fact has permitted a latitude of treatment, unstraitened by the fear of presumption. Greek men and women are approached, not from the

centre of nationality, but from the circumference of humanity. "All the world's a stage."

The myth of Dionysus is the glorification of enthusiasm, which the poet believes to be the sap of the Tree of Life, the spring and origin of all good fruit.

There is nothing lovelier among natural things than a bunch of grapes, a Bacchanalian cluster of rare crimson, grey with the lovely mist of the world of vegetation, which we call *bloom*. There is nothing lovelier among human things than Love with its halo of self-sacrifice. The natural object and the human affection find their harmony in metaphor:—

"Thou art the wine whose drunkenness is all  
We can desire, O Love! and happy souls  
Ere from thy vine the leaves of autumn fall,

Catch thee, and feed from their o'erflowing bowls  
Thousands who thirst for thy ambrosial dew."



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CORESUS, *priest of Bacchus.*

CEPHALUS, *father to Callirrhoë.*

EMATHION, *son to Cephalus and brother to Callirrhoë.*

MACHAON, *a doctor.*

CLEITOPHON, *uncle to Callirrhoë.*

ACEPHALUS,  
MEGILLUS, } *Citizens of Calydon.*  
ASTYNOÛS,

A FAUN.

CALLIRRHOË.

NEPHELE, *daughter to Megillus.*

HYLIA, *daughter to Acephalus.*

PROMENEIA,  
TIMARETE, } *Priestesses at Dodona.*  
NICANDRA,

ANAITIS, } *Mænads.*  
DIONE,

AGLAURIA, *mother to Machaon.*

DEMOPHILE, *a nurse.*

*Citizens, Mænads.*

SCENE.—*Calydon ; twice removed to Dodona.*





# CALLIRHOË.

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## ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Temple of Bacchus, Calydon. Anaitis and other Mænads asleep on the steps. Enter Coresus.*

*Coresus.* She sleeps : what wearied wildness in that  
arm

That crowns the head above the twisted vine's  
Noon-faded leaves ! Spent agitation gives  
Strange calmness to her face. There is no calm  
Like that upon the sea after the wind  
Hath frenzied its blue breast,—as prophecy  
The bosom of a Pythoness,—and passed.  
She wakes and gathers up diffused dark limbs,  
Springing from slumber as a wild beast springs  
Forth from its lair.

*Anaitis.* Coresus !

*Coresus.* Snatch not up  
The thyrsus with so tremulous a grasp !  
To-night there is high revel in the hills,

Mystic assembly in the deep recess  
 Of cloven altitudes ; meanwhile, for rest  
 The women lie in heaps about the court,  
 Their dappled fawn skins laid aside for heat,  
 Their ruined wreaths of scarlet briony  
 And fennel-staves lying athwart the limbs,  
 That gleam the clearer in the glow of sleep.  
 So shall they stay till eventide. What dream,  
 Anaitis, thus hath broken thy repose ?

*Anaitis.* A dream I had—the altar !—Drops of gore !

*Coresus.* Ay, thou rememberest how the hinds were  
 torn

In the last chase. Dione cried to see  
 The fleecy fringes of her nebris dyed  
 In blood, and fled. Then didst thou catch her hair,  
 And fling her, as a slender ivy-wand,  
 Amid the bloody fragments. Thought of this,—  
 Her horror, thy o'erhasty violence,—  
 Hath trampled with rough footstep on thy rest.

*Anaitis.* It was the altar : one for sacrifice  
 Was kneeling.

*Coresus.* Yea, Dione, suppliant  
 Beneath thy chastening hand.

*Anaitis.* Dione ! No.  
 It was thy blood, Coresus, was the priest's !

*Coresus.* Would the god suffer it ? Anaitis, wake,  
 Be sober ; I have work for thee to do !  
 Go forth, and to the maids of Calydon  
 Break the rich tidings that I bore to thee.

*Anaitis.* Whom dost thou seek to gather to our band ?

*Coresus.* I know two maidens. One is Nephele,  
The daughter of Megillus, a fleet roe,  
Tethered, as goat, to graze, pulling the cord,  
Not pasturing. Go, loose, and bring her here.

*Anaitis.* An easy task. . . .

*Coresus.* Not therefore meet for thee.

There is a girl : beside the sycamore,  
Once when a mighty storm was gathering,  
She came alone for water to the brook.  
Her water-pot was rested on a ledge  
Of stone, and she, her large arms rounding it,  
Was looking up. From the cerulean  
The glittering fire outbroke. It played on her ;  
I caught her face tempestuous with delight.  
But momentarily  
I looked on her ; the crowd was gathering,  
The swarthy bull was waiting for the knife,  
And, ere the heavier thunder shook the shrine,  
Its neck was severed. O *Anaitis*, there  
Is the true *Mænad* ! The wide difference  
'Twixt love and love, and oh ! the wider room  
'Twixt pieties ! from the profaner sort  
That wreathes its victim as it roasts its flesh,  
With the same hands, same temper ; then the stir,  
The flutter of fresh life religion brings  
To common youthful ardour ! but the few,  
Who learn it not from custom, suddenly

Behold it, as Narcissus his fair form ;  
 Would peril all for its embrace, discern  
 In it the image of the unknown self,  
 And leap to it adoring. Even thus  
 Will that still girl feel the entrancing awe  
 Of the great mysteries. And dare I dream  
 To-night, beneath the silver firs, in sight  
 Of the full-breathing heavens, she shall clasp  
 The thyrsus, loose the honey-golden locks,  
 Give her fair bosom to the breeze, her soul . . . ?  
 Anaitis, win her !

*Anaitis.* Win her for yourself.

*Coresus.* Till now the highest favour I could grant  
 Was to make known my will. Five wandering years  
 As faithful comrade of my rest and march  
 Thou hast been with me, not incapable  
 Of lofty energies, needs, sympathies,  
 Beyond thy sex. Now I behold thee shrink,  
 Shrink to mere woman in thy jealousy.  
 No helpful comrade, a base sycophant,  
 Whom one must bribe.

*Anaitis.* 'Tis false. My thyrsus bears  
 A steely summit and my breast is soft ;  
 Thus will I slay Coresus' sycophant !

*Coresus.* Mad fury ! stay thine hand !

*Anaitis.* And dost thou care,  
 Care that Anaitis bleed not ?

*Coresus.* Well, that day  
 The panther caught thee in his hungry paw,



I slew him ; but I do not care to herd  
With beasts as fierce as he, perfidious !

*Anaitis* [*crouching at his feet*]. My master, pardon !  
thou didst rescue me.

Dost keep still the great scar.

*Coresus*. Look not so wild !

Thou shalt not seek to move Callirrhoë,  
Who wouldst but fright her with thy maniac face,  
The sweetly-ordered one ! But if to-night  
The bright-cheek'd Nephele join not the dance,  
Thou shalt endure still harder words of me.

*Anaitis* And if I bring her ?

*Coresus*. I will consecrate  
To Dionysus. That is thy reward.

[*Exeunt*.]

SCENE II.—*Callirrhoë's Home. She is spinning.*

*Callirrhoë* (*sings*).

Ay, twirl the spindle, twirl it round,  
The spindle with the dark wool wound !  
But, maiden, if too well you spin,  
Or twist the threaded purple thin  
With deftest finger, think, oh ! think  
Of her whose web of snowy link,  
Deject Arachne, hangs above.  
See that the gods thy spinning love.

[*Enter Nephele*.]

What mean these crimson vine-leaves round thy feet,

My Nephele? Why is thy hair unbound,  
Thy polished cheek rent with the bramble scar,  
And thy bright lips discoloured? What! In tears?

*Nephele.* Callirrhoë, oh! hide me in thy gown;  
It is so perilous a grief, a shame  
So wild and strange that I must tell thee of;  
I tremble to remember it, and more  
To tell it open-faced. To the red bower  
Of oleander, by the forest-stream,  
Where thou and I in girlish solitude  
So oft have hidden for sweet conference,  
I went, and looking up, saw—not thy clear  
Calm brows, Callirrhoë—a face as bright  
As burnished shield, with hair that looked alive,  
And cloak of shining hide. I lay as still  
As if a leopard couched there; but she came,  
The wondrous creature, threw her spells on me,  
And emptied my young heart as easily  
As from a pomegranate one plucks the seeds.  
And then she drew me, in caressing arms,  
By secret pathways, to the temple-gates,  
Where stood Coresus.

*Callirrhoë.* The new Bacchic priest?  
My father likes him not, thinks that the gods,  
In scorn of mortal insolence, connive  
At this chaotic fury in men's wits.

*Nephele.* Callirrhoë, had you been there I think  
You would have saved me. It seemed different  
When great Coresus turned and looked on me.

He is himself a god. He beckoned me,  
 As the mild bull Agenor's child. We drank ;  
 I let him loose and wreathe my hair alone.  
 He asked me—had I strength to dedicate  
 Myself to the delivering god. I felt  
 The Mænads gather round me. I was doomed,  
 And as a bride, half-swooning in the flare  
 Of Hymen's torches is borne blindly off,  
 I was caught up by the great choric throng,  
 And in a daze of wonder found myself  
 Whirling the thyrsus. . . . It may be I swooned.  
 When I awoke it was quite still. I thought  
 To creep home quietly, but my strange dress,  
 And a deep shame and wonder at myself,  
 Made me seek shelter with thee.

*Callirrhoë.*

Yes, thou shalt

Rest thee in mine own bed, and afterwards  
 I will anoint thy cheeks and braid thy hair,  
 Thou foolish child ; and when less piteous  
 Thine aspect, I will give thee thy full due  
 Of blame. Now to my room.

[*Exeunt.*

[*Re-enter Callirrhoë.*]

(*Sings.*) Ah, Eros does not always smite  
 With cruel shining dart,  
 Whose bitter point with sudden might  
 Rends the unhappy heart,—  
 Not thus for ever purple-stained,  
 And sore with steely touch,

Else were its living fountain drained  
Too oft, and overmuch.  
O'er it sometimes the boy will deign  
Sweep the shaft's feathered end :—  
And friendship rises, without pain,  
Where the white plumes descend.

Well, I must scold her for her wilfulness,  
And take her back, in penitence and tears,  
To her old tasks. My spindle strikes the ground.  
How strong of brain and heart perforce must be  
The Fates who spin our lives, from the confused  
And tangled mass of Destiny withdrawing  
Fibres that form the web of our existence.  
Oh ! work terrific, solemn ! Yet I'd be  
A kind fate to my brother and my sire.  
This thread should be the love of Nephele.  
For when Emathion tells her father's praise,  
"Not Omphale more cunning at the loom."  
And when I question archly—"Thou the god  
Caught in her toils?" he turns from me and laughs.  
And for my father. . . . But necessity  
Dominates fate ! Then is it well, indeed,  
I cannot spin their lives for those I love ;  
Else had I died sooner than twist the black,  
Thick thread of blindness through my father's days.  
I wish Emathion would come ! 'Tis late.  
"See that the gods thy spinning love."  
[*Noise without.*] 'Tis he, my glorious brother, radiant  
From the palæstra.

[*Enter Emathion.*]

*Emathion.* At the spindle still,  
My nimble-fingered, grave Callirrhoë?  
Like feast day, I put by the work. The gods  
Love not late spinning.

*Callirrhoë.* I have nearly done.  
Be patient, for I'm spinning you your life.  
Twisting such threads of deep-dyed happiness,  
As might inspire with proud impiety,  
And ruin you.

*Emathion.* What doom hangs in this thread?  
Say, does the fibre run along with gold?

*Callirrhoë.* A thing more precious.

*Emathion.* Health, strong-sighted age,  
Still beautiful?

*Callirrhoë.* Nay, will you urge me still?

*Emathion.* I'll threaten you ere long.

*Callirrhoë.* Well, 'tis the love  
Of Nephele. Good brother, you were warned,  
And now!—But where's our father, for at noon  
Your careful hand was guardian to his steps  
That would to town? You have not left him lone,  
Sightless among the crowd of seeing men?

*Emathion.* I left him chatting with a hoary friend  
Of tedious, ancient days, of unknown wars,  
And men, whose names were but a link of sounds  
Unto my recent ears. 'Tis wonderful  
How old men when together will re-thrash  
The out-thrashed past!

*Callirrhoe.* I know that age's tardy converse, dull  
 With iterated stale experience,  
 Chafes youth's hot-blooded moods as station'd rock  
 The running stream. 'Tis easier far for me,  
 Who lead so still a life, to keep from fret ;  
 The lake is always quiet round the stone.  
 Emathion, forgive ; but the old man  
 Complains he rarely sees you with his hand,  
 Who wast his eyes' great object. Oftener  
 Be near to him. . . .

*Emathion.* Poor father, I will sit  
 My hand in his when next he fills the hearth.

*Callirrhoe.* My kind Emathion ! I dare not pass  
 The door, now darkness mixes with the light,  
 Like dark wine spreading through clear water, yet  
 I'm ill at ease. Our father should be here.  
 'Tis growing dark, oh, not for him ! But still  
 'Tis late. Emathion, step out and look.

*Emathion.* Callirrhoë,  
 He told me I might leave him.

*Callirrhoe.* Yes, I know.

[*Exit Emathion.*]

So beautiful,  
 So gentle and so kind ! I'm glad I told  
 About my father's plaint. Poor old blind eyes,  
 That cannot see him in his loveliness,  
 Most pity-worthy is your lack of sight !  
 I'm tired of spinning ! In the viny sweeps  
 Of sunshine on the hills, if a god lurk,



Deliverer of women from their toil  
In household darkness to the broad sweet light,  
Do they so ill to flee to him for joy?  
“Can it be meant,” I often ask myself,  
“Callirrhoë, that thou shouldst simply spin,  
Be borne of torches to the bridal-bed,  
Still a babe’s hunger, and then simply die,  
Or wither at the distaff, who hast felt  
A longing for the hills and ecstasy?”  
The fair twinned sister of the Delian  
Must empty the rich passions of her heart  
Where purple arbutue-boughs encompass her,  
In safest silence, or the bosky oak  
Lets not a sigh escape. She must be mute,  
The fair twinned sister of the Delian.  
For him, the sunshine and the song; for her,  
The virgin lip and the inviolate shade.  
Hear me, thou holy Huntress, and protect  
My thoughts from lawless wandering beyond bound  
Of thy own sacred precincts. Steps! of two!  
Dear father!

[*Enter Machaon and Emathion.*]

*Machaon.* He is safe at Cleitophon’s.  
I came lest you should fear, and on my way  
I met my friend.

*Callirrhoë.* My kind Machaon, thanks!  
I own that anxious fear had just looked in  
At door o’ my heart. But enter.

*Emathion.*

Yes, I’d have

These Mænads cleared away. I hate their cries.

*Machaon.* As peacock-shrieks at night.

*Emathion.* I hate their wild

Contorted forms.

*Machaon.* Like pines on Cithæron.

Your sister goes for water to the stream

That makes your doorway pleasant at all hours.

A rare and lusty maiden ! Why, the jar

Sits on her head with firmer majesty

Than Rhea's towery crown. Lo, she returns,

With red and watery fingers, and a pot

Filled justly to the brim. Callirrhoë,

Give me a draught !

*Callirrhoë.* The little twy-eared bowl—

Emathion, fetch it.

*Emathion.* I don't know its place.

*Callirrhoë.* I'll go. [Exit.

*Machaon.* 'Tis pity you're too old to learn

(*To Callirrhoë, who re-enters*).

A cup-bearer to whom the gods should rise.

And now I've risen, I must straightway home.

My mother had my supper on the board—

A quail ! I have not told you that I met

Megillus—in his head a thunder-storm,

Of which the lightning flashed from out his eyes.

It seems his daughter's made off to the hills.

*Emathion.* Never !

*Machaon.* Why, cheeks are Tyrian in a trice,

Emathion ? Well, well ! good-bye, fair friend. [Exit.

*Callirrhoë.* Brother, 'tis true. She lies upon my bed.  
She was deceived, is sorry. Take her home.  
If you would take her home, she might be spared  
From punishment and tears—two gloomy blights  
You should protect your rose from.

*Emathion.*

She has thorns.

I will not meet her parents.

*Callirrhoë.*

Fetch her nurse.

*Emathion.* She ill deserves protection, yet in this  
I'll be her slave to-night. *Callirrhoë,*  
I threw the discus far beyond the rest.

*Callirrhoë.* I'm very glad.

*Emathion.*

You only love too much

Your idle brother. I must have a kiss !

You were too dread for touch of mortal lip

While you were spinning Fate.

[*Exit.*

*Callirrhoë.*

The twilight falls

In showers of darkness. She will tell me all

The mystery of the effulgent night,

Up in the bluer dark among the stars,

Will *Nephele*. They say the new god shares

*Pan's* maziest secrets in deep fellowship ;

That the birds speak and even the brooks reveal

The thoughts of their clear currents. Every day

I fill my pitcher by the bubbling stream,

Close to the sycamore. It seems a girl

Full of sweet impulse. I would gather her

To my still bosom, and receive her love ;

But we are sundered. What if this new god

Of the warm vineyards and the budding trees  
 Could draw her trembling spirit to the brink ?  
 It cannot be ;  
 Else had our fathers known and worshipped him.  
 I reverence my father's old grey head ;  
 I reverence antiquity, the hoar  
 Aspect of Time. What folly to revere  
 The headstrong, blustering present, Time's untrained,  
 Immodest youth ! The elder age alone,  
 With Nestor-like authority, can hush  
 To-day's rough disputants. I hear its voice  
 Proclaiming the eternal pieties  
 These Mænads have be-mocked. I'll wake the child,  
 Ere my thoughts grow too angry ; strip from her  
 The ivy meshes, cleanse her lips from stain,  
 And dress her in white vesture meet for maid. [Exit

SCENE III.—*Beneath a sycamore tree. Callirrhœ resting.*  
*Enter Coresus at a distance.*

*Coresus.*

How beautiful

The face, how fixed in its forlornness, wan  
 As Ariadne, when she kept the coast  
 Of Naxos, ever straining for a sail.  
 Ay, but Eleleus sought her with acclaim,  
 Crowned her, and set her bride-wreath in the stars.  
 Oh, how I love her ! how I burn for her !  
 And yet I fear her obstinate as him  
 From whom as from the grape its purple coat

Iacchus tore the skin. Heaven ravish her !  
 Coresus is too weak.

Callirrhoë,

I seek for a strayed maiden, Nephele  
 Her name, a bearer of the Bacchic reed,  
 Lost on the hills last night. I oft have seen  
 Ye two together on the temple-steps  
 Or washing at the brook. Where is she fled ?

*Callirrhoë.* She's safe within her father's house, ashamed  
 Of her wild yester-revel and revolt  
 From seemliness and maiden modesty.  
 Seek not again to capture her !

*Coresus.*

I seek

To ransom, not enslave, Callirrhoë,  
 Calling all men to the Deliverer.  
 Look in mine eyes, and say if servitude  
 Be not your daily portion. Can you set  
 Your limbs free to the rhythm of your soul ?  
 Is there a passion in you that dare speak ?  
 Are not your bosom's offspring, young desires,  
 Served to you mutilate, a sick'ning food  
 By the world's impious custom ? Spurn the feast  
 As the Divinity the Libyan dish !

*Callirrhoë.* These are wild words, bewildering to the  
 brain.

*Coresus.* As heaven's inrush. Be brave, Callirrhoë ;  
 Ask yourself have you not a deeper need  
 Than the stale rites of customary gods  
 Can satisfy ? and speak in earnestness.

Tell me about yourself !

*Callirrhoë.*

I oft have longed

For speech with the dark sea and glittering hills,  
For stories of the world, for wider care  
And love of creatures other than myself.  
Can your god give me these ?

*Coresus.*

He came to bring

Life, more abundant life, into a world  
That doled its joys as a starved city doles  
Its miserable scraps of mummying bread.  
He came to gladden and exalt, all such  
Must suffer. Call men to the battle, swords  
Clash the response ; bid them arouse themselves  
From foolish habit, customary sloth,  
In bestial ignorance of your intent,  
They trample, tear you. Dionysus thus  
Suffered ; he still endures at Calydon  
Men's insolence in his rejected priest—  
Though founder of fair laws, of citied life,  
And guide to the untrodden paths of peace.

*Callirrhoë.* The potent rioter ! Of old the gods  
Gave culture by the harp, the helm, the plough,  
Not by the ivy-wand.

*Coresus.*

Seems it so strange

That Semele's sublime audacity  
Should be the origin of life urbane ?  
We must be fools ; all art is ecstasy,  
All literature expression of intense  
Enthusiasm : be beside yourself.



If a god violate your shrinking soul,  
Suffer sublimely.

*Callirrhoë.* Yet I hold it true,  
Divinity oft comes with quiet foot.

*Coresus.* To give a moment's counsel or to guard  
From instant peril. When a god forsakes

Olympus to infuse divinity

In man's mean soul, he must confound, incite,

O'erwhelm, intoxicate, break up fresh paths

To unremembered sympathies. Nay, more,

Accompany me further in my thought,—

Callirrhoë, I tell you there are hours

When the Hereafter comes and touches me

O' the cheek. I see the triumph of the King,

The gleaming crag of the Acropolis,

The mustered city spectatorial

Of vast emotion on the hollowed hill.

In the midst the Bromian altars. Oh, he sways

That peopled amplitude, that press of life,

With so intense a tyranny he holds

The reins of its very breath. Men may not stand

Beholding, when the conflict's at the heart ;

The event's cold ere it reaches them. There, there

They watch as mothers watch their wrestling sons,

Fell Mora with humanity in clutch,

The dying hero with the victor lip,

The lordless creature, dominant and lone.

*Callirrhoë.* I tremble at your god, for terrible  
In wrath I fear him ; though you speak him fair.

I surely know

That he provokes men to unnatural deeds,  
And once stirred frenzied mother as a fell  
Tigress to murder her deluded son.

*Coresus.* More shalt thou hear ; more horrible detail  
Of the avenger. Of a churlish king  
Sudden he seized the recreant body, lashed  
Its members severally limb by limb  
To horses fleeter than strong Phœbus reins ;  
Nor shuddered when the dull Edonian  
Left a mere sputtering trail behind the hoofs.

*Callirrhoë.* Peace, peace, Coresus ; he will bring us  
woes,

Woes on my father, on Emathion,  
On Calydon, my city, if he bears  
A breast so ruthless. I will hear no more.

*Coresus.* Turn not away, Callirrhoë ; by goads  
The ox-souled must be driven ; yield response  
To Heaven's desire of thee ; love humanly.  
Love is the frenzy that unfolds ourselves ;  
Before it seize us we are ignorant  
Of our own power as reed-bed of the pipe.  
The rushes sang not ; from Pan's burning lips  
Syrinx sucked music. Wert thou lute to love  
There were a new song of the heaven and earth.  
I have been foolish frightening thee with things  
Too wonderful for a soul-snooded girl  
To bear the thought of ; think of them no more ;  
Think but of me, no veiled divinity,

Coresus, a mere man, a suppliant  
 Clasping your knees in his extremity ;  
 Craving the alms of your great love, and yet  
 Withal so ravenous at heart, he scarce  
 Can bide the time of his petitioning.

*Callirrhoë.* I have not loved—

*Coresus.* Till now. You cannot say  
 You love not.

*Callirrhoë.* That I will not yield my love  
 To Bacchic priest, I can. From earliest days  
 I have been trained in the old pieties ;  
 And oft 'mid common household work have smiled  
 To think how like the blessèd gods my hands  
 From chaos could educe a tiny world  
 Of perfect order. My dear father's peace  
 I will not wreck, as Nephele ; he ne'er  
 Shall miss his daughter at the evening board,  
 Nor sadder, find her truant to herself,  
 Indocile, indolent. It cannot be  
 That any but a mocking messenger  
 Can come in Heaven's name to set the child  
 Against the parent.

*Coresus.* As unseasoned wood  
 That smokes and will not kindle is flung by  
 For any refuse purpose, while the train  
 Of torchlight sinuous winds among the hills,  
 A starry serpent, so art thou cast out,  
 An apathetic slave of commonplace,  
 Sluggish and irreceptive of true life,

From all high company of heavenly things.

Go to your home.

*Callirrhoë.* Oh Heaven shelter it !

*Coresus.* Go home, Callirrhoë ; ask if all be well

Within the city : do not fear men's looks,

Or any whispering about the streets.

The temple-rites reclaim me ; from your loom

You have been too long absent. Go in peace.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE IV.—*A Bower in a Garden.* Enter *Emathion*.

*Emathion.* How beautiful is life and youth and love ;  
How fair are girls and boys—how more than fair  
My Nephelè !

Her brow is of as clear and warm a whiteness

As a young egg that lies in the dove's nest !

She comes ! I'll hide !

[*Hides.*]

[*Enter Nephelè.*]

*Nephelè.* He is not here. Naughty *Emathion*.

*Emathion* [*apart*]. But only just outside.

*Nephelè.* It is unkind ! He vow'd to keep his time.

*Emathion* [*aloud*]. And only kept his vow.

*Nephelè.*

You naughty boy !

*Emathion.* If you will call him good, he'll break his

vow,

And run away directly.

*Nephelè.*

Naughty boy !

*Emathion.* If you will call him good, he'll keep his

vow,

And come and sit by you.

*Nephele.* He's a good boy.

*Emathion.* Look at those roses, they are near each other,

And what do they keep doing?

*Nephele.* Nothing much.

*Emathion.* Why, lightly touching.

*Nephele.* There's a wind that makes them.

*Emathion.* Love be our wind ! [Kisses her.

*Nephele.* There's some one stepping past.

'Tis Hylia and her father.

*Hylia.* He hath asked,

Hath asked my love.

*Acephalus.* He is an amorous youth !

Go wed—but don't forget old father, girl.

*Hylia.* Oh no, nor mother. I will come across  
And kiss you every morning.

*Acephalus.* Do not cry.

Astynous, if he saw, would think I said

You should not marry him, and yet he'd see

It was not rain of grief, but the first dew

O' the dawn of joy. [They pass on.

*Nephele.* I wish my father loved me.

He beats me ; you won't ?

*Emathion.* Beat you ! Horrible !

I cannot beat a dog. Don't talk of it.

Look at that cyclamen !—

The little flowery satyr, all white ears.

It must not hear of anything but love.

I love you—let it hear that you love me.

*Nephele.* I love you.

*Emathion.* Nephele,

Thus should life be one chord of youth, love, joy !

SCENE V.—*Temple of Dionysus. Before the Altar.*

*Enter Coresus and Anaitis.*

*Coresus.* Gall thrown in sweetest wine will make the  
cup

As bitter as 'twas sweet. Throw poison in,

And it is venomous as cockatrice.

The goblet of my love holds now a draught

'Twere death to wet the lips with. She has scorned

My god, my passion, as she might refuse

A gift of oleander some light boy

Would lay in her pale bosom. So she spurned

The human gift of my man's utter love,

So great, it grew Titanic in its bulk,

With swelling sinews of immense desire,

And laid its own magnificent excess

At her feet for her to wonder at and scorn.

Woe, woe to her !

About the columns booms a shout of woe,

Responsive to my menace. 'Tis the god

Sealing my malediction. Now instead

Of that grand prostrate love, hate's feller form

Encounters her—a Herculean power

Equipped for vengeance. I will make her quail,



Anaitis ! Those proud lips that scorned my love  
 Shall blanch and quiver. Dost thou think of it,  
*My love, Anaitis ?*

*Anaitis.* Ay, an icy girl,  
 With veins that knew not summer.

*Coresus.* With a heart  
 Colder than coldest marble in a vault.

*Anaitis.* Thou hatest her ?

*Coresus.* As light-bereaving death.

*Anaitis.* Then let me spread my hair upon her !

*Coresus.* Nay.

To tear the lovely branches of her limbs  
 From their white trunk were suffering too small,  
 Too easy.

*Anaitis.* Let me tear her. 'Tis enough.  
 I'm hungry for her.

*Coresus.* Woman-tiger, nay !  
 Thou shalt not tear her.

*Anaitis.* Let me curse her then—  
 Call madness, bid it plunge its scarlet brand  
 Within her brain to burn as stubble.

*Coresus.* Nay.

On her no curse ; but on her city set  
 Long-famished plague. That curse as flicker cast  
 Athwart the mourner's face from glaring pyre  
 That feeds on what is precious, will evoke  
 Worse agonies than the sharp pangs of death.

*Anaitis.* My arms are lifted upward. Lift up thine.

*Coresus.* I lift them to a god who can chastise.



*Anaitis.* Speak, call, nay shout to Heaven !

*Coresus.* Bacchus, hear

Thine injured priest, thou great Revenger, hear !  
 Throughout the city let quick murrain breed ;  
 Drive Sleep away from his grim brother Death,  
 And then let Death pass single through the gates.  
 Let hardy limbs grow slack, crook up and fall—  
 Then burn and stiffen. Populate the streets  
 With Hades' ghosts, long, fleshless, pallid men.  
 Let the foul body know no laving hand ;  
 And let no flowers touch the hideous face ;  
 The mouth receive no coin ; no bed be dressed ;  
 No jar of water stand before the door.  
 Let the whole city be one house of death,  
 The gates its threshold, and humanity  
 Its single corpse. Be Vesta's flame extinct,  
 While ravening funereal fires leap high  
 Fierce from consuming corpses. Let strange fear  
 Flap wings unseen that beat upon the heart  
 Bestilling it with terror. Thus revenge !

*Anaitis.* Hear !

*Coresus.* Hear ! [Thunder and lightning.

*Anaitis.* The lightning flares, the thunder rolls !

*Coresus.* Our prayer is heard !

*Anaitis.* And granted by the god.

*Coresus.* Dreadful the "yes" of the omnipotent.

*Anaitis.* Silence, not thunder, were a dreadful thing.

*Coresus.* The tomb is wide as mouth of tragic mask.

*Anaitis.* Wide for the god's and for thine enemies.

*Coresus.* Io triumphe ! Io ! for the sign !

*Anaitis.* The silence is as dreadful as when corpse  
With all the wailing women hath been borne  
Away, and the house echoes to no step  
Or voice.

*Coresus.* And in this silence it may be  
That Destiny receives within her womb  
Plague ; and ere night descend—  
The rapid birth may be accomplish'd—Doom  
Rent by Fulfilment, and, 'mid human shrieks,  
The slaughterous child of wrath be recognised.  
During the throes of the great birth, my brain  
Is restless. I must rove, I cannot rest.

*Anaitis.* Woe to the arms that first receive the child.

*Coresus.* Woe to the city of whose life 'tis heir !

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE VI.—*A Wood. Enter Dione.*

*Dione.* Oh, the deep woods !

I feel they hide within their inmost hearts  
Some strange and thrilling secret, mighty, dark,  
Unshared by mountain, sea, or Heaven's self.  
My childhood felt its burthen when the shade  
Of the green darkness grew about the path  
I followed for dropt nut or lonely bloom.  
Oh, to be friend to the great forest, earn  
Its trust, and penetrate its green reserve !  
Within the bosky dells,

And breathless gloom of the dense leaves, I've grown  
 Familiar with the gentle happy fauns,  
 And mystic dryads with dun crowns of oak.  
 Yet these too share the mystery of their woods,  
 They feel it, round their simple lips it lurks,  
 But cannot take expression.—Angry steps  
 Crack the curled arbutle-leaves upon the ground.  
 The feet are brown ! I'm very lonely here !  
 Coresus ! but I tremble at his brow.

*Coresus.*

Ye gods !

A hurricane is raging in my heart,  
 And shaking the foundations of my life  
 Almost to ruin. Round me all is still,  
 So still, I could throw up my arms and beat  
 The bushes till they whirled, only to make  
 What is without me more like that within.  
 To think the vaulted world holds not a breeze,  
 And all its winds are packed into this heart !  
 Come, storm ; come, crackling gale and tempest, come !  
 I'd bear the wild contention of my breast.  
 But outer calm, dark green serenity,  
 Coo of a ring-dove ; it is maddening,  
 Provocative of torment and impatience  
 That makes the torment worse !

*Dione [aside].*

It is a song !

Who sings thus timely ? 'Tis a little faun  
 Coresus loves, with buoyant happiness  
 Almost in flight. I'll slip away and watch.

[*Hides at a distance.*]

*Faun (singing).*

Down the forest-path I fled,  
 And follow'd a buzzing bee,  
 Till he clomb a foxglove red.  
 He filled full the nodding cup ;  
 I stood and I laughed to see ;  
 Then closed it and shut him up,  
 Till I laughed and set him free.

O master, master, I have had great game,  
 And I have laughed and laughed until I cried,  
 And laughed again, to have him safely there,  
 The bee within a blossom ; for I tried  
 To catch him, and he flew so fast before,  
 I could not, till he dropt his wings and crept  
 Up the tubed foxglove. Master, you are glad ?

*Coresus.* My silly faun, glad that thou hadst thy wish ;  
 Would that a flower encompassed mine, and not  
 A stricken city !  
 A blossom holds a bee, a city plague.  
 My childish faun immures the murmuring bee,  
 I the malignant plague. How far apart,  
 How sundered by such difference of choice,  
 Are he and I !

*Faun.* I'm tired.

*Coresus.* And yesterday  
 We gathered chestnuts and our laughter mixed !

*Faun.* Listen, you do not listen ; I am tired.

*Coresus.* I hear ! Ha, boy, thine eyes agaze ! Laugh,  
 boy !

Thou wilt not laugh ? Thy face was cut for smiles.

*Faun.* I love you.

*Coresus.* Pretty faun, methinks thou dost.

*Faun.* I had a little heap o' hazel nuts

I counted underneath the silver fir.

A squirrel came, his tail along his back,

And looked at me until I gave him half.

*Coresus.* 'Twas a bold squirrel !—O my god, my god !

Scatter my wild prayer, even as the wind

Disperses foam the wrathful sea uplifts.

Scatter it thus ! Oh, I was deeply moved !

Had I no cause ?—no cause ? That could not be.

I suffered scorn, insufferable wrong,

Shame ineffaceable ! I marked her mouth,

I saw it push out as a bud of rose ;

It parted into blossom, and for scent

I got a taunt, still in my nostrils rank.

I'll give her fragrance, smell of rotting friends ;

She shall draw in the odours of sweet death.

She shall—— But tell me of the pigeon's nest.

*Faun.* Why, yester-morn an egg lay on the twigs,

On the hard twigs.

I pitied it, and laid it on the moss

At foot o' the tree. This morning it was cold ;

And so I pitied it again, and put

It back. To-morrow I shall find it warm.

Shall I not, master ?

*Coresus.* Yes.—She would not love

A Bacchic priest, she said. Because I serve

Religion am I then unfit for Love ?  
 What ! does religion blurr the face or dwarf  
 The stature, lame the feet, or make one shoulder  
 O'ertop the other ?  
 Because I strike with sacrificial knife,  
 A woman stabs my honour with her tongue.  
 Because I pour libations to the god,  
 A woman empties all her scorn on me.  
 A priest's love, like a sinewless old hound,  
 Is kicked aside ! My office is a brand  
 That stamps me despicable in the eyes  
 Of the one being I have ever loved  
 To my love's height and stretch of my heart's arms.—  
 And is the ant-hill busy ?

*Faun.*

Yes, indeed.

The ants are busy day and night, and yet  
 I think they're sometimes idle, for they run  
 About my hand and to and fro ; I call  
 That play, and laugh at them.

*Coresus.*

She scorned the priest,

Then did she scorn the god. My wrath is holy,  
 Sacred and priestly. Ay, Callirrhoë,  
 Priestly, I say.

*Faun.*

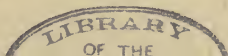
You're dull as the old owl,

Who, when I dance, looks straight before his beak,  
 And, when I laugh, turns round his eye on me !  
 I do not like the owl.

*Coresus.*

Be still, be still.

It's growing dark. My heart's a cataract





Of whirling blood ; my veins are furious channels  
Of crimson passion. I am drunk with wrath,  
I stagger, and the trees appear to writhe.  
What, have they got the plague ? And all the people  
Will writhe their arms like that ?

*Faun.* I wonder if the woodpecker would cease  
His knocking to the dryad in the tree  
If I ran up ?

*Coresus.* I wonder if the first  
Blue corpse is carried out in Calydon.

*Faun.* I'll try his true love for the hidden girl.

*Coresus.* And I will see if any yet be dead.

[*Exit wildly.*]

*Dione* [*advancing*].

Weep not. He's sad, and doth not love thee less.  
I'll with thee to the ant-hill. Show the way,  
And dance along.

[*Exeunt.*]



## ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Bridal Chamber. Astynous and Hylia.*

*Astynous.* O Hylia, my dark and shapely maid,  
New bound to me as wife—a bliss too great  
For me to grasp, discovered gold in mass  
My eager arms are hopeless to contain—  
O Hylia, thy silence slits my heart  
With cruel edge. A vague, dark horror rolls  
Thine eyes, like hunted doe's, and thy touch leaves  
Hot impress on my sense. My Hylia,  
Is married love thus fearful, feverous, still ?  
Then curse I Hymen, and would have my wife  
Maiden once more, that I might woo again.

*Hylia.* Astynous, dear husband !

*Astynous.* Ah, that's well.  
Speak thus deliciously again. Thy words,  
Though few, are each a red-ripe, perfect fruit  
Of speech. A smile ! but a mere ghost of such  
As live where now I kiss ! Is it so strange,  
So fearful to be mine forever ?

*Hylia.* Nay,  
Astynous ; in sooth I'm very gay  
And joyous.

*Astynous.* With sad face ; an oracle  
That hides its import.

*Hylia.* O—h ! I'm falling !

*Astynous.* Nay,

Requesting an embrace !, Ye gods ! her head  
Hangs loose with backward chin ! My Hylia,  
Speak to Astynous ! O my bride, my bride !  
I cannot hold her longer, she must drop,  
So weighty grows her delicate, slight form.  
Mother, O mother ! Nay, she cannot hear.  
I'll bear my dreadful burden to her room.  
O bridal-bed, that will not hold the bride  
To-night ! I shall go mad ! It yet may be  
She faints and will revive to fill these arms  
Less heavily than now ! Ha ! I have crushed  
The myrtle wreath that's tumbled from her hair !  
I dread the omen ! Nay, she'll soon be well.

[*Exit, carrying her.*]

SCENE II.—*Callirrhoë's Home. Cephalus before the door.*

[*Enter Callirrhoë.*]

*Callirrhoë.* What, lonely, my dear father ? When I left  
Emathion was with you.

*Cephalus.* Hastily

He broke from me, my child ; that busy youth  
Evamon, passing by, took hold of him,  
Swearing he must not miss the eloquence

Of Periander, the new sage, who draws,  
Machaon says, our city's idle youth.  
The beamy breeze hath grown a little chill,  
Or loneliness hath something damp'd my heart ;  
Almost I seem in Hades, from the sun  
Cut off as those sore-sighing ones below.  
Soothe me, Callirrhoë ; thou know'st a strain  
Of Eos' love. Sing me that song of light !

*Callirrhoë.* If he could see me ! Can I trust my  
voice ?

That cloud that swift as lizard to its hole  
Made for the city ; it pursued me fast—  
Is with me here, and on my father's head  
In gathering volume tarries.

(*Sings.*) To the gods doth Eos bright  
Bear the tidings of the light ;  
Catching, as the morning steals,  
At swift Helius' chariot-wheels.  
But to-day she doth not care  
What the clouds for livery wear ;  
Dark and dewful are her eyes  
When the morning sun doth rise ;  
And she sheds still heavier tears  
As his glory disappears.  
Smitten by Scamander's bed,  
Her bright warrior-boy lies dead.  
She hath washed him in the wave,  
Deck'd him in a garment brave ;  
But his eyelids, sunk more deep,

Settle into marble sleep.  
 She must to the father go  
 With her life-bedark'ning woe.

*Cephalus.* Dear child, there is a trouble in thy voice.  
 Say, art thou weary climbing the long hill ?

*Callirrhoë.* Nay, father ; for the song is sorrowful.—  
 Oh, could he see ! now it is like a web,  
 A mesh of tempest, tangling all the streets  
 In blinding toils !—But listen, I will try  
 The happy end, and we shall both be cheer'd.  
 (*Sings.*) Claspings the great knees in prayer,  
 She beseeches, “ Oh, if e'er,  
 When the shrouding night-clouds flee,  
 Rosy from the reddened sea  
 Sprang thine Eos, grant me this—  
 Leave not my pale boy in Dis.”  
 Then the father faltered—smiled ;  
 Eos' blushes saved her child.

*Cephalus.* Oh, the young light ! how goldenly it stole  
 In May-time 'mid the glade of budding oaks,  
 When thou did'st gather flowers for Artemis—  
 Thou mindest ?—that spring-day six years ago.

*Callirrhoë.* Yes. O my father, let me lead thee back ;  
 I fear some great calamity—a cloud  
 Hangs over Calydon.

*Cephalus.* Then will we in,  
 I felt the air unwholesome.

*Callirrhoë.* Father, stay !  
 The heavens press on us, and I dare not move.

*Cephalus.* These sudden showers make the young vineyards swell.

Kindly it thunders, we shall have soft rain.

*Callirrhoë.* Nay, there is deadly hurricane, a stir  
After the stillness, like the whirring wings  
Of swooping eagle. Let me hide thee ! So !  
Cling close to me.

[*Enter Demophile.*]

*Demophile.* Haste ! Little Nephele  
Is struck with sudden sickness. Come to her.

*Cephalus.* Quickly, my daughter.

*Callirrhoë.* Can I leave him now ?  
My father, trust me, for I know the sign ;  
We lie 'neath Heaven's curse.  
I have been summoned by the Bacchic priest  
To worship and to love ; rejecting him,  
He burst upon me with strange threats.

*Demophile.* More woe.  
Callirrhoë, haste ! Sweet Hylia is dead. [*Exit.*]

*Callirrhoë.* Father, I  
Thy child am wholly subject to thy will.  
Our Calydon is smitten for my pride ;  
This brood of dreadful cloud—this black descent  
Of feverous wind. Let me to Bacchus' shrine !  
I will deny no more Coresus' love,  
I will entreat him supplicate the god  
For my dear city, for Emathion, thee,  
My father. Oh, command me speedily !

*Cephalus.* Nay, child, we suffer for the foolishness

That has bewitched this city ; drunken heaps  
 Of maddened women have infected it.  
 The babe hath perished, while the mother's breast  
 Has suckled the young panther on the hills.  
 Men, of their wives forsaken, have grown wild,  
 Disordered, hungry, and uncivilized.  
 Apollo sees his sister's shrine desert,  
 Her virgin followers flocking to the hills  
 For all unseemly revel. He descends,  
 Branding the irreligion with the scathe  
 Of Heaven. Fear not, my child, for me ; I fear  
 My father's gods, and to their care commend  
 My daughter. Hark ! Another urging foot  
 Is here !

[*Re-enter Demophile.*]

*Demophile.* Haste, ere the little one be dead.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*The Market Place. Cleitophon, Megillus  
 Acephalus, Machaon, Emathion, citizens.*

*Machaon.* Idle i' the market-place ! 'Tis no time for  
 talk. We must all work. Our wealth in dead cannot  
 be counted, so fast and faster does Plague's impress give  
 them currency.

*1st Cit.* Ay, but the elders meet. Peace. Peace !  
 He continues—

*Cleitophon.* For all along the way my course was choked  
 With issue—thick as concourse, when the crowd



Gathers for some high festal sacrifice—  
 Of black'ning corpses. Men cried out to me :  
 " You who have wisdom, dwelling near the gods,  
 Learn if neglected hecatomb or rite,  
 In ignorance polluted, is revenged  
 By this strange glare of sanguine ulcerous death,  
 That sudden paints our bodies, burns, and spreads,  
 And, heating as it travels onward, lights  
 A raging furnace, till the chilly gust  
 Of death creep after and put out the flame.  
 Help us, and we——

*2nd Cit.* No oration—no periods !

*Acephalus.* Already the corpses drop like birds on  
 the snows of Scythia.

*3rd Cit.* And death feeds the flames as an eagle her  
 eaglets.

*Cleitophon.* Woe to us ! 'Tis the forsaken shrine of  
 Artemis, the withered flowers stretched on the dusty  
 marble, that hath wrought this evil.

*Acephalus.* Fire-brands ! Flint, wood, flame ! To  
 the temple of the Barbarian ! Burn, kill, ravage !

*Megillus.* Now it may just be that the fault is not in  
 the place of your condemnation, that you're beating the  
 grass while the snake's yonder. I would say that the  
 new god may be a god ; and then where are we,—aye,  
 and the fruit too ! I'm for the Bromian !

*4th Cit.* Evœ ! I'll straight home, chaplet my brow  
 and——

*Machaon.* Be your own corpse-adorner. He falls.



Can gentle gods thus disfigure their friends? I'll bear him hence.

4th *Cit.* Carrion for the flames !

[*Exit Mac. with Cit.*]

*Cleitophon.* My words are the streak of light on the dial-plate of council ; they mark the course of the time most expressly.

[*Re-enter Machaon.*]

*Machaon.* [*to Emath.*] You dog me like an avenger. How now ?

*Emathion.* Machaon, I am sick.

*Machaon.* As the girl turned pale when Hymen on his marriage-day fell from his house much hurt. Keep from the north side the town, where the wind blows, and you'll live to in-urn us.

*Emathion.* Oh, it blows ill all quarters.

*Megillus.* I've heard it told, by whom I know not, in an impersonal whisper as it were, that Cephalus' tall daughter refused the love of the Bacchic priest, knocked it flat with the hand of her scorn, and 'twas hinted the city is plagued for this behaviour.

*Acephalus.* Then let us give her to his desire ! We'll not die that she may pick lovers.

*Cleitophon.* The maid is of my kin, devout and chaste. I'll not have her infamously espoused. He's a brown vine-pole.

[*Enter Demophile.*]

*Demophile* [*to Emath.*] Nephele prays you come to her.

She's dying, fluttering in the very breast of death, that sorely hurt the little thing in catching it. Come !

*Machaon.* Dost hear, Megillus ?

*Megillus.* Business, business ! [*Exit.*

*Emathion.* Don't touch me ; go away !

*Machaon.* His light orbs are black, eclipsed with panic, and he's white as ass's milk. Go, forward, nurse. [*exit Demophile*] Emathion must protect the threatened honour of his sister. Music !

[*Enter Astynous and a band of revellers.*]

*Astynous.* Hail, friends ! Death is a glutton we've sworn to pamper with a honeyed dish. We cram us with pleasure to sweeten its gullet. Ivy and ribbons ! 'Tis a rare garnish ! My bride was snatched from the marriage chamber, a pleasant morsel ! I'll not be behind her in flavour when I'm swallowed up. Give me a cymbal ! Who'll join us—dance—sing—shout ! Strike up, comrades !

Eat and drink and twine your flowers,  
Till we make a feast—not ours !

[*Exit with revellers.*

*1st Cit.* Choicest bullocks, wide-streaming wine, let us kill and pour before heaven, and call on Artemis for help.

*2nd Cit.* Nay, let us confess the Bromian with groans and orgies.

*Machaon.* My good friends, counsel is hydra-headed, 'tis authority alone hath unity of brain-power. Seek ye the voice of the godhead that fulfils the oaks of Dodona.

*1st Cit.* An oracle, an oracle !

*2nd Cit.* 'Tis wisely spoken ; but the way is long. Pestilence keeps not Time's tardy paces. The city will be still ere we receive the message.

*Cleitophon.* Ye are deaf to my words, so 'twere best to seek the Holy Oracle.

*Emathion* [*to Mac.*]. Methinks I cannot breathe again till I get beyond the gate.

*Machaon* [*pointing to Emath.*]. Here is a windy-heeled messenger—Hermes-shod. Two years ago his feet swept the way to Dodona ; he knows each turn of the road, each ford, bridge, and bye-path.

*Emathion.* I'll go to the very tether of my life to serve you.

*2nd Cit.* Spoken like a patriot.

*1st Cit.* 'Tis settled, he goes.

*Acephalus.* At once. No leave-takings !

*Emathion.* Now.

[*Re-enter Demophile.*]

*Demophile* [*to Emath.*]. You've stayed too long. She's quite still. But your father lies and asks for you as he grips at his vitals.

*Emathion.* Is it the plague ?

*Demophile.* I should think it is the plague, if you were to see his face, hot as the dog-star.

*Emathion* [*gasping*]. No more—go away ! [*to Mac.*] Have you anything to smell ?

*Machaon.* Here's a sweet burnt herb for you.

*Emathion.* I can't go to my father. I've promised to

seek the oracle, and I've promised to start *now*, and my father taught me to love my country.

*Demophile.* Very well. You've a milky look for a patriot. There will nowhere be a father for you when you return, you'll be an orphan. I'll get some healthy woman from a clean house to put a little food in a scrip for you. An' to think he'll be an orphan ! [Going.

*Emathion.* Nurse, say I love him—let him know that I love him. And say, nurse, that I was bound to my country. Poor old father, say that his pangs torture me. Say that you saw me go—*now*. [Exit.

*All.* Zeus be our helper !

*1st Cit.* A noble youth !

*2nd Cit.* He slew nature at the foot of his country. He's the boast of Calydon for beauty.

*Machaon.* There's suffusion in the eye of that man's judgment—though the boy's loveliness captivates. His golden head is perfect as Cytherea's apple.—What is it, my good nurse ?

*Demophile.* Ægle is restless—

*Machaon.* What ! your dear child that makes such trim wreaths ?

*Demophile.* Her lap was full o' white violets that kept twitching off.

*Machaon.* I'll with you.—Disperse, friends. Plague, like the wolf, loves a flock. Scatter yourselves, and let confidence rule your pulses.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

SCENE IV.—*Nephele's Home. Callirrhoë with Nephele's body.*

*Callirrhoë.* How different from that fair Bacchic  
sleep

From which thou once did'st wake, my Nephele,  
This hideous lifelessness ! Ye gods ! instead  
Of the bright laughter of the dreaming lips  
A grin is on the sharp, shrunk mouth ; the cheek,  
Moist with the balmy warmth of its own blush,  
Now glistens beaded with a chilly sweat.  
Once in delirium, when her speech came thick  
As blood-clot through the edges of a wound,  
Some memory of dewy morning-hills  
I caught in her hot voice.

Oh, I must hide thee, bury thee ; but first  
My lips shall touch the cheek that lies against  
My white robe like a tawny withered rose.  
She'd cry to think my lips  
Loathed her that once delighted in her mouth.  
There, there ! [*kisses the corpse*]  
Love and the vultures are the only things  
Death cannot sicken. All are gone from her ;  
Her parents, sisters ; and Emathion  
Came not to comfort her. What could it be  
Delayed him ? Now I need his help. But first  
I will wind round thee my long veil ; he ne'er  
Shall see thee thus. [*Enter Demophile.*



*Demophile.* Oh, home, Callirhoë ;  
 Thy father sickens ; he may now be dead.  
[*Exeunt hurriedly.*

SCENE V.—*Dodona : the sanctuary on an eminence ; at  
 some distance the sacred grove of oaks and beeches.*  
*Enter Timarete, Nicandra, and Promeneia, who  
 walks apart.*

*Timarete.* Observe !  
 Our sister mumbles ; nods, and mumbles on.  
 As drivers shake the rein when horses lag,  
 So do we ancient women, with the head  
 Urge our slow tongues. She mumbles to herself.  
 Mark that !

*Nicandra.* I do.

*Timarete.* Observe, her yellow cheek  
 Is bronzy with the mixture of a blush.

*Nicandra.* I've marked it, sister !

*Timarete.* Chew'd it over ?

*Nicandra.* Ay.

*Timarete.* Methinks there are unseemly diamond-sparks  
 A-turning in her eyes.

*Nicandra.* I've seen 'em, sister.  
 Like points of light they twinkle in the rheum.

*Timarete.* What is the meaning of 'em ?

*Nicandra.* Folly.

*Timarete.* Ha, ha, hi !

*Nicandra.* She never was

As ancient, grave, and inaccessible  
In nature as appearance.

*Timarete.* Say'st thou so ?

*Nicandra.* We caught her once in weakness, two  
years gone.

She stood, her dry, old hands so tight, I wondered  
They broke not into powder ; her grey locks  
Whirled, like the strips of bark when peels the birch,  
I' the wind ! She watch'd a man who left the shrine.  
I laughed.

*Timarete.* And I.

*Nicandra.* Thou can'st remember it ?

*Timarete.* Ay ! how she made as she did watch a  
bird

That swept the sky above him. Ha ! ha ! hi !

*Nicandra.* Methinks it was this boy she watch'd !

*Timarete.* Hi, sister ?

*Nicandra.* I say, methinks it was this boy she  
watch'd.

*Timarete.* Ay, an' he was a boy ; light, curling hair  
Did rib his head all over.

*Nicandra.* An' he came  
From Calydon to question o' the famine.

*Timarete.* It is the same.

*Nicandra.* Art sure ?

*Timarete.* Ay.

*Promeneia.* Would to heaven  
He'd seen me when my brow was flat and white  
As cleanly, folded linen ! Now 'tis dirty



And crumpled up ;  
And there's no washing more for it, no well  
To make it white ; no press to make it flat.

*Nicandra.* 'Tis shameful thus to see the girl peep  
through

The casement of old womanhood. I fain  
Would cuff the impudent wench in yon old face.

*Timarete.* Ye ancient gods ! laugh not, nor jig my  
sides !

*Promeneia.* This mouth of mine,—its edges now turn  
back

Like those o' withered leaves ! He'd kiss my lips ?  
He could not find 'em, they are down my throat.

*Nicandra.* Her dotage doth wax passionate.

*Timarete.* Hi, sister ?

*Nicandra.* I say, her dotage doth wax passionate.

*Timarete.* E'en so.

*Promeneia.* Last night he shuddered when Nicandra's  
Brown immense bosom pushed through its white wraps ;  
Timarete with blue-nailed finger-tip  
Pointed. He hath not shuddered to my face !  
Not yet !

*Nicandra.* 'Tis certain we must seek the shrine,  
Get the response, and thus despatch her boy !

*Timarete.* She puts it off from day to day.

*Nicandra.* Poor crone !

So old and light ; we'll do't !

*Timarete.* Well said ; we'll do't.

*Promeneia.* Youth is the prodigal of golden wealth ;

The middle term of life becomes a miser,  
 And clutches at the coins which still remain.  
 But old age is a lack-all and a beggar  
 Too foul for pity. Oh, he comes ! I blush  
 For my peaked, leathery visage as for sin !  
 He's looking at my straggling chin,—O god !  
 And his so beautiful !

[*Enter Emathion.*]

*Emathion.* My reverend dames,  
 Whose holy mouths make verbal Heaven's will,  
 Again I do entreat that with high Zeus,  
 Th' omniscient Father, ye will hold converse ;  
 And learn the cause of the dread pestilence  
 Engulfing human life ; what angry god  
 Must be appeased ; what hostile altars smoke ;  
 What lamentations weary heaven's vault.  
 Ten days I wait ; no oracle is given.  
 I shall be cursed, be followed like a child,  
 And found here playing truant, my good name  
 Dishonoured and my faith discredited.  
 I shall be ruined if the god is dumb.  
 Upon my knees I supplicate for grace.

*Promeneia.* What doth he say ?

*Timarete.* Turn round thine other ear.

*Emathion.* O venerable sisters, grant my prayer !

*Promeneia.* The day is not auspicious.

*Nicandra.* False you speak.

*Timarete.* 'Twas yesterday.

*Promeneia.* Wrongly you calculate.

*Timarete.* Why, yesterday you said was not auspicious !

*Promeneia.* I did mistake, it was to-day.

*Timarete.*

She dates

According to her wish. Within an hour

We will declare the oracles of Zeus.

*Promeneia.* Oh, not to-day ! Oh, not to-day ! Good youth

Be ruled, and force not heaven ! Dreadful things

Will be declared ; no comfortable word

Will issue from the beeches, they will groan

Hair-raising horrors, grisly messages.

*Timarete.* Give her no heed, or thou wilt be undone !

*Nicandra.* Be obdurate !

*Promeneia.* He wavers ! [*clutching him*] Dearest youth, I love you, and they hate !—Now he hath shuddered !

*Emathion.* O—h ! loose me, hag ! Nay, venerable maid,

Thy sacred grasp appalled me. I am honoured.

*Promeneia* [*aside*]. Contemptible old woman ! never mutter

Love with thy hollow gums and ragged mouth ;

For love must pass through gates of marbly teeth,

And open the red curtains o' young lips !

*Timarete.* A tear is hanging from her peaky nose.

*Nicandra.* I see, I see !

*Promeneia.* I'm jealous of my sisters.

At them he shuddered ; but he shrieked at me.

[*She paces apart.*]

*Timarete.* Young man,  
Thou did'st not like her skinny fingering?  
Then seek the oracle!

*Nicandra.* Thou did'st not like her mumble in thine  
ear?

Then seek the oracle!

*Promeneia* What will he say?

*Emathion.* I'll gladly seek it.

*Timarete.* Bring your woolly bough  
This time an hour.

*Nicandra.* Tremble, and kneel, and pray.

*Timarete.* Come, Promeneia, since your leg is stiff,  
Here is my hand to help.

*Promeneia.* Malignity.  
I walk as well as you.

[*They descend the steps ; Prom. falls.*]

*Timarete.* She's on her shins!

Ha! ha! hi! I knew her leg was stiff!

*Nicandra.* Why, any one could see it! Let me rub  
'em!

*Timarete.* She wants to rise. [*To Emath.*] I pray  
you pick her up.

*Emathion.* Is she hurt?

*Nicandra.* She's crying. Are you hurt, good sister?

*Promeneia.* Hurt, hurt. And yet he cares! Laugh-  
able age!

Your arm, and let me go!

*Nicandra.* You're humbler, sister!

[*Exeunt.*]

*Emathion.* I laugh and curse. Faugh ! they are filthy hags !

I'm sick at their great feet stuck round with corns,  
And livid chins which seem to chew their breath.  
They make me cold ; I never was so cold.  
Good heavens blast me  
Before I grow like them ! One says she loves me !  
Keep down, disgust ! O execrable hag !  
I shall be ill with thought of her ; and then  
Her filmy eyes will mind me of my father's.  
I promised once to close them, but 'tis certain  
Our private promises must snap in twain  
For country ; and my sister  
Would close them, ('twould have been most horrible  
To drape the lid over the muddled orb !)  
He always loved her best.  
That execrable beldam ! If she works  
Upon me thus, I'm sure to have the plague.  
I'll think not on her ; yet, within an hour  
I meet her ! I'll be firm, get the response  
And never seek an oracle again !

[*Exit.*

SCENE VI.—*Callirrhoë's Home.*

*Callirrhoë.* There are who think that ignorance is sin  
Past pardon, since it is incurable  
As blindness, when no faculty of sight  
Is native to the eyes. I thus have err'd  
Unconsciously, or wherefore could he die,

My father ? They are mine, these dead.

[*Enter Machaon.*]

*Machaon.* I come

With tidings of Emathion.

*Callirrhoë.* He was missed,

And missing, at two death-beds.

*Machaon.* I was near

Your brother when the word from Nephele

Was brought ; he shrivelled and turned white, so white

I put my arm in his and drew him off.

*Callirrhoë.* And little Nephele, you let her die  
Without her lover.

*Machaon.* That is aptly said.

One coin less to old Chiron.

*Callirrhoë.* Afterwards

Did not Emathion hear that suddenly.

My father had been stricken ?

*Machaon.* Ay, he heard.

But there was that about him made me know

That if I let him look much on the sick

You would be brotherless.

*Callirrhoë.* Why, so I am,

Since my dear father on his death-bed found

That he was sonless. Silently he lay ;

But after any stirring at the door,—

The neighbours coming in with anxious step,—

He felt about among the fleecy wraps

For his boy's hand, and being baffled, died.

*Machaon.* Be not too harsh ; it is no cowardice,



Save on the battle-field, to shrink from death.  
Fleet-limb'd Emathion from Dodona soon  
Will fetch the remedy Æsclepiads  
Are fools at mixing. Had I not prevailed  
In urging the bewildered silly folk  
To seek the oracle, you had been led  
Ere now to Bacchus' altar, to allay  
The jealous anger of the genial god  
For scorn of young Coresus. You divine?

*Callirrhoë.* Would they had come and carried me away  
To be their victim !

*Machaon.* Oh, leave me to choose  
If there be sacrifice. There's Agatha,—  
I pass her where she piles her pomegranates  
Each day, and daily as I pass repent  
I deal not, save for health, with poison-herbs.  
Her crooked shadow is detestable ;  
A thing the sun must draw reluctantly.  
Now, she would make  
A pretty offering for the amorous god,  
And the fair marble wall  
She sets her fruit by be no more deformed  
By the uncomely darkness of her shape.

*Callirrhoë.* Speak not profanely ; they are mine, these  
dead.

*Machaon.* The air hath been unwholesome many  
weeks.

Women, disordered and intoxicate  
Returning from their revel on the hills,

Have filled their homes with fever, and increased  
 A sickness that, without this irritant,  
 Had not exceeded in fatality  
 The plague of the great feast ten years ago.  
 Men were not then half frenzied, and a few,  
 Yielding to counsel, were restored to health.  
 Now all essay to heal is idleness,  
 Though one persuade and argue till one's hoarse,  
 So resolutely they refuse to touch  
 What has not magic in it. I deceive  
 No man, and so they die.

*Callirrhöë.*

Oh, surely those

Whom the gods love live prosperous and blest.

*Machaon.* Love! The cow, with a pleasant consciousness of offspring, may feed the better her calf by her side. Such complacency my mother feels in my presence. 'Tis the sole definition of love my experience warrants. For my part, I've noted Heaven's best lovers are fortune's most cruel sport. Truly the enigma crumples one's eyebrows. Nay, crease not yours. They're not bristly enough to wrestle with the brain's pugnacious problems. Keep smooth-browed.

[*Enter Demophile.*]

*Demophile.*

Oh, my child,

A fury rises 'gainst the Mænads. Some  
 By their dishevelled hair are haled about,  
 Trampled and wounded.

*Machaon* [*restraining Callirrhöë*]. Mine shall be the task.

I hate these Mænads, and can therefore keep  
The crowd in check.

[*To Demophile.*] Ægle, the saffron-haired,  
With my own hands I carried to the pyre.  
So rest her ghost. Now for the angry crowd. [*Exit.*

*Callirrhoë.* And is your Ægle dead ?

*Demophile.* Nay, never mind.  
You must not tilt my tears over like this.  
I carried my grief straight until you spoke.  
An' do not look such struggles—let the eyes  
Throw down their silver shields and go to sleep.  
Under the sycamore I'll settle you,  
Where none have died, and there are many bees.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE VII.—*The City. Anaitis, Dione, Mænads, Citizens.*

*Anaitis* [*dancing on a heap of cinders*]. Behold the  
remnants of the feast of death !  
These little heaps, flame-bitten, in my hand,  
Once comprehended tall and mighty men  
Who scorned our god. The heavens make no sound,  
Their laughter's in events. Thy raillery,  
My god, these light feet shall commemorate,  
Shall dance before thy presence in this town  
Upon this carpet of transformèd men  
Grey as a wolf-skin. [*Shouts.*

*Woman* [*rushing from the crowd*]. She is trampling  
down  
My little girl !

*1st Cit.* Why, then we'll dance on her !  
 Ye gods !—the cinders of a smiling child  
 She tosses up like Ætna ! Hark ye, fathers,  
 An' will ye bear the sight ?

*2nd Cit.* We'll act our answer.  
 Down with the jackal laughing on our dead !

*Anaitis.* Evœ ! Evœ !

*3rd Cit.* We'll trample her to death.

*1st Cit.* Ay, an' we'll force the lock of every joint  
 And strain the hinge of every sinew in  
 This hateful, impious body ! Drag her on !  
 To the temple ! Here's another. Break her up !

[*They seize Dione. Enter Machaon.*

*Machaon.* They'll kill her ! Truly, as you love your  
 lives,

I counsel you, good citizens, refrain  
 From this mad conduct. Look to it, my friends.  
 Just leave these crazy Mænads to their cubs ;  
 Or if you will, drive them without the town ;  
 Let them grow hungry on the hills, and feed  
 On quivering goat's flesh, but don't massacre,  
 Lest each slain Mænad cost a hecatomb  
 Of your best oxen, when Zeus' will is known.

*1st Cit.* The choice white breed ! Methinks it were  
 not ill

To wait the oracle. If we should err——

*Machaon.* A little injury done to the gods,  
 If measured by the expiatory vow,  
 Is worth avoiding.

[*Aside.*] See, Dione, through  
That alley there is safety. [*Dione escapes.*]

[*To Citizens.*] Hence with you.  
To work ; unceasing toil alone can dam  
This pestilence from pouring on your air  
Till but to breathe is death. Bestir yourselves.

[*Exeunt Citizens.*]

[*Enter Coresus at a distance.*]

Ah ! the mad priest ! A most unsteady gait,  
The face so lean you'd think those rolling eyes  
Fed on 't, as thriving twins  
Suck thin the mother ; cast of countenance  
Livid, with sudden flare that purples it !  
Poor fool !

*Coresus.* Self-pity, prudent accusation !

*Machaon.* I spoke in comment, though soliloquy.

*Coresus.* I care not for your sneer, let it be tossed,  
A petty fire-brand, to the heap of wrongs  
On which this plague is fed. Insult again.

*Machaon.* His face is flaming ! How combustible  
Some faces are !—You've wrought a noble work,  
If it be yours—this art of dyeing skins  
And giving flesh the odour of stale fish.

*Coresus.* I hate the plague,  
And you.

*Machon.* More rational, I merely hate  
The sickness ; you my science deprecates  
A madman, dreaming that the heavens note  
His anger of chafed passion, when a girl

Looks coldly on him.

*Coresus.*

'Tis insuff'able,

The taunt ! Speech weeps its impotence to quell  
Such insult, as a stripling sees his sire  
Murdered, and simply sobs upon his sword.  
You dream I drew great Bacchus to suffuse  
This many-peopled town in agony  
At baulk'd desire ? [*Mach. nods.*] No ; for the thank-  
lessness,

The triple-hided hebitude that pain  
Alone can penetrate. A dog will take  
The bone you throw to him ; a mortal stares  
In obstinate hostility if one,  
Longing to swell the number of his joys,  
From laden hand beseech him to be blest.  
Teach men to suffer, and the slaves are apt ;  
Give them fresh hope, entreat them to delight  
They grow as stubbornly insensible,  
As miser to a beggar's eloquence,  
Clutching their clownish imbecility  
As the gods grudged them that.

*Machaon.*

Men's hopes, desires

Are difficult of transport ; you must take  
The mule's path up the customary pass.

*Coresus.* Cursed be the brain that sees the waking  
light

And keeps by Hecate's besmearèd tombs ;  
Accursed the heart that at dithyrambic rush  
Of chorus keeps its measured Doric beat ;



And cursed the palsied who, at cymbal's clash,  
Forget not age.

*Machaon.* Nay, modesty avers  
It is not decent for old men to dance.

*Coresus.* Cursed the lame creature, custom, that  
should go

'Mong men a laughter for its hobbling gait,  
And sets them all a-hobbling, emulous.  
Cursed be the piety——

*Machaon.* I counsel you  
Restrain your votaries, their irony  
Of mirth is hateful in the midst of woe  
Such as our Calydon bemoans. I fear  
You'll find a broken form, the life blood spilt,  
Against your shrine.

*Coresus.* He will put all to rights.

[*Callirrhoe passes with a band of mourners.*

[*Exit Coresus suddenly.*

*Machaon.* I'm fain to envy these god-beset mortals.  
Those above may be but indifferent judges of our  
actions ; yet the immense stimulus of spectators ! One  
cannot always pluck a man by the gown to force him  
listen, and thinking 's such a rare gymnastic o' the brain,  
'tis pity none note it. What a public we have if our  
pates are verily unroofed to divinity ! And yet mortals  
take it, the gods know no more than what they tell  
'em in their prayers. This praying, how shall we define  
it, if it be not to take a god by the chin tenderly and  
detain him with the small gossip of one's wishes, fears,

and expectations ? There's my mother ! Her whole religion is an anthology of Olympic scandal. My contempt of her hath brought me to this cynicism. Pah ! I was surely wrapt in the cradle-flame of immortality ; then pried my maternal parent, and spoilt all.

[*Exit.*

SCENE VIII.—*Dodona : the sacred grove. Timarete, Nicandra, and Promeneia under three oaks, with their arms lifted. A smoking altar at some distance. Emathion advances to the confines of the grove and kneels.*

*Emathion.* I hear a sound as if the branches snored,  
Hollow and peaceful ! What if I should die,  
Die suddenly ? 'Tis possible, for terror  
Oft kills at once. My heart's a stone  
That doth depress my side most grievously.

[*The wind keeps rising.*

The trees wake up. The air is full of noise.  
Those ancient women have their hour of grandeur ;  
Their wrinkles now become them. I shall die !  
This shrieking wind will kill me ! All the leaves  
Stretch out their tongues at me ! Why don't they speak ?  
They move them up and down, and make a noise  
As dumb men do, and struggle hideously.  
I listen, but there's nothing, nothing, nothing !

[*A whirlwind.*

Oh, see !

The wind is flaring round the dreadful sisters ;

They're twisting spirally ! Their hair, their hair !  
 The wind is carrying it all away  
 Like whisps of straw !  
 I think their scarfs will strike against my head,  
 They seem to grow so long and come so near ;  
 And that I feel would kill me. Heaven help !  
 What myriad tongues wag at me from the trees !  
 Would I could hold them still, or tear them out ;  
 But that would want a million hands ! O gods !  
 There's something in the wind which is not noise.  
 A voice, a voice !

*Timarete.* Yes !

*Promeneia.* Yes !

*Nicandra.* Yes !

*Timarete.* Vainly the tomb-fires flashed where the  
 lightning-flame was the midwife  
 Rending from Semele's womb the boy Zeus had gotten  
 in godhead :  
 Cephalus' daughter hath scorned the Mænad-cares and  
 Coresus.

*Promeneia.* Therefore Zeus will grant no pause from  
 plague ere the maiden  
 Haughty to Evius' priest shall try the feel of his altars,—  
 Knife through the milkless breast or riving the throat's  
 spouting vessel.

[*Emathion shrieks and falls senseless.*

*Nicandra.* Keen as the famished for bread, a god in  
 his vengeance claims victims.

Yet will heaven receive the life laid down for another :

Who for Callirrhoë dies, atones her sin of rejection.

*Timarete.* Hear !

*Promeneia.* Hear !

*Nicandra.* Hear !

[*The wind slowly goes down and they  
come out of the grove.*]

*Promeneia.* Where is he ? Gone so soon !

*Timarete.* What doth she say ?

*Nicandra.* Hi, sister ?

*Timarete.* What doth she say ?

*Nicandra.* Asks where he is.

*Timarete.* Along the road—good boy !

*Promeneia.* Emathion, Emathion, Emathion !

*Timarete.* Her voice—the very squeaking of a mouse !

*Nicandra.* Could not be heard the other side o' the  
bush.

*Promeneia.* Emathion, Emathion, Emathion !

*Timarete.* She's got it up now to the shriek of an owl.

*Nicandra.* Give her an echo ; he'll not answer her.

“ Emathion.”

*Promeneia.* He must be far away ! I shout so loud.

*Nicandra* [*stumbling against Emathion*]. Why what is  
this ? The stripling ; and stone dead !

*Timarete.* Nicandra, help me down upon my knee.

He hath but fainted. I can feel his heart.

He'll soon come round, and here's a nurse for him.

[*Showing Promeneia.*]

My back ! Nicandra, help me up ! My back !

Oh, oh ! my back ! There—gently, sister !—ho !

Come, Promeneia, squat beside your boy,  
Crook up your squeaking knee-joints till he wake.

[*To Nicandra.*]

That lunge you gave me, sister, might a' loosen'd  
The roots o' my back ; it almost feels torn up.  
I'll thank thee for my stick ; it's by the altar.

*Nicandra.* I'll fetch it, stay ! [Exit.

*Timarete.* And, Promeneia, hold me up a bit.

*Promeneia.* I will not. I must light the lamp o' this  
face.

Gone out completely.

*Timarete.* Do, and let me fall. [*Re-enter Nicandra.*  
Here's my Nicandra, with her harder heart,  
Hath brought my stick. We'll shake along together  
Who know that we are old and relative.

[*To Promeneia.*]

Paint, dress in wanton robes !

The interim of this swoon cries out for use ;  
He'll wake and worship. Thank me, and we'll go.

[*Exeunt.*]

*Promeneia.* There's something in it.

I have a pot whose red conserve would dye  
The very tint of nature, and a robe  
Of richest grain—my mother's—with a hem  
That shines as if the sun was underneath  
And edged it, as I've often seen a cloud,  
And . . . I will do 't ! . . . No, no ! I will not do it.  
If he can love, he loves me as I am,  
A brown old woman, shrivelled till her veins

Stand out like those in a mare's side. He's long  
In coming to himself. I am a fool !

[*She sits by his head, her arms round  
her knees and her chin on them.*]

Now I can use him as I will ; can gloat  
Upon him till my eyes are gorged ; can take  
His hair up in my hand, thus, thus ! A curl  
Has caught my finger. He would give to me  
A golden ring, a ring ; and I will have it  
If my one tooth must go. Nay, I have scissors  
To cut away this precious bit of him  
Which loves me. There ! And I can kiss him too.  
Can pluck the kisses from his lips as feathers  
From strangled birds : and so I will, I will.  
I'll pull them from his lips, thus—thus, and thus !

[*Kisses him.*]

He stirs !—Emathion !—and he looks at me !

*Emathion.* Are you my grandmother !

*Promeneia.*

Even so.

Now he will love me.

*Emathion.* Yet she died, I know.

How old am I ? She watched me when a child.

'Tis very strange ! Where am I ? Who are you ?

*Promeneia.* Your grandmother, who never really died,  
But went to keep the oracle of Zeus.

Emathion, you are very like your mother ;

I watch'd you as you slept, and that revealed it !

Kiss me ! I hope you'll love me.

*Emathion.* I am not like my mother. I am told



No son was so unlike ! Callirrhoë  
 Is like her ! Oh ! Callirrhoë—the oracle !  
 There's something weighs upon me—just as if  
 A foot was on my heart. Oh, I remember !  
 You are that damned old woman, and you lie  
 To call yourself my grandmother ! I live  
 To bear the anguish of my sister's death.  
 'Twas you said she must die.

*Promeneia.* 'Twas I that warned you from the oracle ;  
 I, even I. You would not listen then,  
 Deaf as an adder. Ah ! I see, you think  
 That I'm too old a purse to have within  
 The golden coins o' kindness.

*Emathion.* No help, no help ! She'll make a beautiful corpse. But she must die first, and all the pain of it, the bleeding, the struggles ; there's what makes me shudder, and I must tell them to do it ; and there's no hope, no help !

*Promeneia.* But there is.

*Emathion.* What ! Help ?

*Promeneia.* Will you kiss me to tell you ?

*Emathion.* Kiss you ! No !—Yes.

*Promeneia.* Thus further spake the oracle :  
 Yet will heaven receive the life laid down for another ;  
 Who for Callirrhoë dies atones her sin of rejection.

*Emathion.* Some one may die for her, die instead of my sister. She has many lovers—and old Cleitophon—and——

*Promeneia.* You——

*Emathion.* Promised . . . I must give it, although I heave. I can't descend her mouth; it's a valley. There! [*kisses her*] A—ho!

*Promeneia.* He's erased it from his lips like a blot! He's rubbing it off still. Oh, the full, fleshy mouth, it was like a bee coming down a dried-up flower,—the roundness, the softness, the warmth came down my hard crevice, and there was no honey for't.

*Emathion.* This place hath given me a sickness for life. I'll away. I'm going with my horrible news to catch the plague and die. Oh, I can't go home!

*Promeneia.* Then stay, stay, oh, stay with me! I'll ask for no more kisses again,—never again, I swear.

*Emathion.* Better the plague, for 'tis a short sickness. I must go home, for I should be tracked if I went elsewhere; I should be killed if I stayed here,—and some one will die for her! I'm going.

*Promeneia.* Never! I'll have you seized; you must return.

*Emathion.* I'll return if I die not; on my faith, I'll return, for I mislike you not so much now I discover your great love, which makes the scale of my favour heavy. [*Aside.*] I'll lie my breath away to escape, for I'll never, never, never return; and I loathe her as the smell of a goat. [*Aloud.*] I'll but take the oracle to my city, and then return, so the plague pleases.

*Promeneia.* You will?

*Emathion.* I will.

*Promeneia.* I hope

You are as true as you are beautiful !

*Emathion.* Trust me ! Farewell.

*Promeneia.* Do you affect me enough to——

*Emathion.* Shake your kind and honest hand.

*Promeneia.* To——

*Emathion.* You swore. There's my hand. I'll return.  
There's flutter in the beeches ! And they'll speak.  
There's a wind rising, and they'll speak, and I could not  
bear it. They'll say I must die ! They're beginning !  
But I'll not hear !

[*Rushes off.*] Oh, I am leaving hell ! [*Exit.*

*Promeneia.* He's torn my vital parts from out o' me  
And carried them away. Yet he'll give back  
My life to me. He said he would return :  
He said it twice. He also said he liked me—  
The dun old woman, with my bits o' hair  
That hang like sheep's wool on a wither'd thorn.  
He said it ! Look, he's on the distant road,  
A precious bead that rolls down a white thread.  
He drops, and there's the thread without the jewel !  
Yet he'll return.

He said so ! I am mad to think he will.

He would not kiss me, would not look at me.

He never will return.

Then will I go to him, though bowed with age,  
Bowed almost double as a sail with wind.

I'll go to-morrow ; nay, to-night ; nay, now.

My stick, and kindly lifts in car and waggon

Will help me on. And here I cannot stay.

I'm not an owl or bat that hates the light ;  
I love it, and the light is in his face.

[*Exit : on the other side re-enter Timarete  
and Nicandra pointing after her.*

*Timarete.* Ha ! ha !

*Nicandra.* Hi, hi !

*Timarete.* Ha, ha !

*Nicandra.* Hi, hi ! Light crone !

*Timarete.* Sister, she's good to make me cry a bit.  
There's nothing touches me, and I must laugh  
To find a use for tears. Upon my jowl  
There's one that tickles me.

*Nicandra.* It is a flea.

I've got it ! Ay, for laughter I could sob.

*Timarete.* It's comforting, the moisture, when your eyes  
Are dry as beetle-cases. Her's are damp,  
So damp I wonder that there are no frogs  
Within 'em ; yet she thinks that men can love  
Peer in their dank enclosures.

*Nicandra.* Naughty sister !

You'll force me to a crying bout o' mirth.  
Hi ! hi !

*Timarete.* Ha ! ha ! [Exeunt.

SCENE IX.—*A room in Aglauria's house. Machaon is  
discovered sitting meditatively with some manuscripts  
before him.*

*Machaon.* 'Tis strange what it costs to make people  
attend. Now, I can consider this disease with as great

intensity as Tantalus his o'er-hanging fruit. To ensure eager scrutiny, you must put an object out o' reach. That's why men are so fond of religion. It ever eludes them, and yet looks graspable. Ay, and there's some natural hunger in the heart too. Thin-stomach'd Tantalus and the bonnie golden gourd splitting open ! 'Tis a pathetic sight ! But here's the Augean stable to cleanse, and the dung must be carried shoulder-wise. My friends join the exploring party in search of the river Alpheus, to turn into it. I am left to toil by shovelfuls. If men had patience, and would not look away from life, I could make their existence tolerable.

*[Goes to a cupboard and looks for something, singing.]*

Have mortals then found that life goes so well

With gods to follow ?

I have cracked the world as a walnut-shell,

And found it hollow.

They must be bored who never are alone,

It can't be pleasing ;

Yet with one's self for ever to be thrown

Is not heart-easing.

*[Draws out a child's hand for dissection.]*

Oh, I turn to my scalpel as a girl to her spindle ! Here's a bit of dissecting to help me recover my temper. What delicate work is this ! What fineness of texture. I will keep the secret of it, though. The arts of introspection are not for the crowd, nor the tunesome comment of my throat on its follies.

[*Sings.*] I with the tedious Machaon walk :  
 It does not strike me  
 That we shall have much philosophic talk,  
 He is so like me.

Yet they who fondly with the gods debate,  
 In tittle-tattle  
 Are heard, or rather on their pate  
 Hear thunder rattle.

[*Begins dissecting.*

A pretty hand ! The little Ægle's dead—  
 Hers was more dimpled. How she loved to pat  
 My cheeks ! Of late she grew a little shy—  
 For childhood's calyx shrivels when 'tis time  
 For bright-leaved girlhood. Little Ægle's dead !

[*Knocking.*

Away my hand and scalpel !

[*Puts them carefully away ; enter Aglauria.*

Ah, the briony ! But you look, for all the world, like a  
 Mænad, mother, with those dangling trails about you.  
 These berries will be serviceable ; yet I would not have  
 my gentle mother put in peril of her life when I covet  
 an extract. Since the rage has set in against these  
 flower-filleted lassies, one can scarce crown one's wine-  
 cup unsuspected.

*Aglauria* [*laying down the briony*]. There, child, for  
 thy fancy ! And I know not the peril I would shrink  
 from to please thee ; so only thou wilt be wary thyself,  
 and not scuffle in the street for the rescue of these vile



foreign women. Does report say true, thou did'st stand by some Mænad, whose flesh the crowd was about to strip off with her ivy?

*Machaon.* Ay. For the case grew semi-surgical.

*Aglauria.* Well, if you're chief physician to *that* band, Old Cleitophon will trouble you no more With stories of his ague.

*Machaon.* Then he'll die.

*Aglauria.* Thine is unruly babble. Cephalus, If thou had'st talked more softly of the gods, Had doubtless chosen thee his son-in-law. And the girl's dowry——

*Machaon.* Had been recompense More than a hundred Cleitophons for cure Of their particular infirmities Could e'er enrich me with. Oh, I will sigh, "Doubtless we have offended heaven," when next Blight falls upon the land. There is no trick Like sighing. Mother, in the mimicry I will be perfect.

*Aglauria.* Fie, you cunning boy ; 'Twill be Callirrhoë you're sighing for ; But if you'd win her, never more be seen Saving of Mænads.

*Machaon.* Mother, do you know It was Dione that I saved from death?

*Aglauria.* You speak as she were mine—a wayward girl  
Her father could not curb—a restless sprig.

And not thy sister. Mark, Machaon, this—  
If thou befriend the witless thing, the crowd  
Will turn on thee. Just let them have their way.  
But do thou keep to the old gods, and soon  
I'll deck thee a fair bride-bed.

*Machaon.*

So—so-ho !

*Aglauria.* I'll get thy supper.

*Machaon.*

Let it be a quail ;

And melons, mother, melons !

[*Exit Aglauria.*]

Ay, she's fair, the strong, lithe, shapely girl, yet not for me. And I marvel not the women of Lemnos slew fathers, husbands, brothers, and put an end to population till they could furnish their brats with heroic fatherhood. Oh, we fail not in the stuff of motherhood ; but the heroes—the heroes ! There's Emathion, a beautiful greyhound at the heels of Circumstance. Yet his sister dotes on him. It enrages me. I'll back to my work.

## ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Citadel of Calydon: Acephalus, Megillus ;  
Machaon on a higher level.*

*Machaon.* Truly this is to affect the god. Thus the Olympians, choosing a vantage-ground above the field, watch men's passions interact. Well, I can do it, and play the god. 'Tis all I can. There's Acephalus, retributive, alert, with tight lips where no breath passes.

[*Enter Cleitophon.*]

Here's old Cleitophon ! He makes the hill-brow his afternoon stroll—nothing perturbed ; for the pious have buzzings from their own bosoms they interpret oracularly, —a small Dodonic grove in the rocky region of their prejudices that knows which way the wind blows. How now, Megillus ? Those rosy cheeks belie the rueful visage.

*Megillus.* Why, doctor, I shall be a poor man if the young fruits keep shrivelling. There's a blight in nature ; something offends. Could you counsel me ?

*Machaon.* You remember that round the temple of Æsclepius some folks are stationed, with brains, to be referred to if the divinity be not curative. Why, man, you are the only mortal, not half-crazed by sorrow, who

has had sense to apply to me. Now I'll tell you, the gods hate inhuman parents. Don't tremble so ; the destruction of a few figs is light punishment ! I advise you be patient—Ah ! [*starting*—and go help my mother up the hill ; the steepness distresses her.

[*Exit Megillus.*

Yes, truly, 'mid the dotted dark of yon patch of vine something stirred. Then I lost it in the cypress grove ; yet I'll fasten my eye on the near edge of the black trees. If he keep the path he cannot issue un-noted. Meanwhile, I'll divert these watchers and myself by learning their unofficial predictions ; if these clash with the oracle, how the fools will be crest-fallen !

[*Enter Megillus with Aglauria.*]

*Aglauria.* I see you climb  
Daily the hill as I ; 'tis well to learn  
How thinks the oracle before one thinks.

*Acephalus.* You're curious. The plague has harmed you not ; but should you care—that son you have so doted on—to leave his clammy corpse, and learn how the winds blew over Dodona's oaks ? An' though it felled the Titan branches, could it trouble you ? Hard woman, I say Chiron must crowd his boat for the return passage he ever makes in solitude, ere this calamity be repaired.

*Machaon.* Well, if we're all bid straight get drunk and dance,

My comely mother, will you lead the step ?

*Aglauria.* I shall do what is best.

*Machaon.* Time-serving is the true elastic mean

Between devoutness and rank blasphemy.

I err in the defect. Old Cleitophon

Is piety stone-blind. [*To Cleito.*] What will you do

If faun-skins become ordinary wear

In Calydon ; will you be singular ?

*Cleitophon.* We need no oracle to show our deeds

Clear heinousness. We know where lies the guilt—

By Artemis' lone altars.

[*Enter Demophile.*]

*Machaon.*

My good nurse,

What brings you to the brow ?

*Demophile.*

Care of my child.

Dear heart ! But yester-night a mother brought

A dead stark babe and threw it at her feet.

Since then she has not cried at all. She sits

And spins, and sometimes in an altered voice

Sings snatches of her songs.

*Acephalus.*

He comes ! he comes !

*All.* Where, where ?

*Acephalus.* Out o' the cypress-grove, and he brings death.

*Aglauria.* Machaon, he is here !

*Machaon.* Hum ! Would you make my knowledge know ?

*Aglauria.* Knew you ?

*Machaon.* Ay, you begot a prophet.

*Megillus.* We'll make him answer for his sloth.

*Acephalus.*

Sharply.

*Machaon.* Now to this people in extreme distress  
The gods will give some riddle ; it diverts

The pain of heart-ache to perplex men's heads ;  
 I have oft tried it. How divinity  
 Is imitative of my ways, or I  
 At heart oracular of the divine !

*Aglauria.* Oh, see, he comes ! Let each man shut  
 his mouth ;

Now shall we learn where lies the safest way.

*Acephalus.* The safest way ! I'll learn where lies  
 the guilt. [*Rushes to meet Emathion.*

*Demophile.* Oh, now my girl will have her fears re-  
 lieved !

*Cleitophon.* Now will the Bacchic worship be sup-  
 prest ;

The land made clean !

*Megillus.* Haply by sacrifice.

Whatever may be asked for we must give.

*Machaon.* Truth, father ! thinking little of thy life,  
 If the gods fancy that.

*Megillus.* My life ! Let those who have begot this  
 plague

Die to allay it, if 'tis so decreed.

*Machaon.* Great zeal for justice ! Now I think of it,  
 That very day you beat poor Nephele,  
 The pestilence—

Before it was a summer sickness—grew  
 Deadly in force. That I distinctly marked.

The gods, discriminative, will adjust—

*Aglauria.* Peace ! [*Enter Acephalus, dragging*  
*Emathion.*



Good Emathion, why so haggardly  
Approachest? Speak, for the plague rages still.

*Acephalus.* They are all ashes in the city. Give  
A victim to our vengeance.

*Demophile.* Speak, she dies,  
Callirrhoë, if you delay—

*Emathion.* *She dies!*  
Gods, ye said truly. Why, what need of me.  
Oh, is she dying fast?

*Machaon.* How dare you tax  
A man o'er-heated, unrefreshed? He raves.  
Give him some drink. Rest on my arm awhile,  
And then interpret what the doves and oaks  
In concert with Dodona's breezes spoke.

*Emathion.* What! Have you heard it, the great  
clashing wind?

*Machaon.* You see, the prophet's vacancy disturbs  
brain's normal action.

[*Enter a crowd of Citizens.*]

*1st Cit.* Speak! the oracle.

*2nd Cit.* Speak, or we'll tear your throat to find the  
words!

*3rd Cit.* What is it? What's to do?

*Machaon.* Emathion, make a clean breast of it.

*Emathion.* Oh, the burthen of the oracle! the wind  
seemed in labour of it, and moaned heavily.

*1st Cit.* Do you think, man, we care for its mum-  
bling? [*They lay hold on Emath.*]

*Emathion.* She's to die, do you hear? And the

oracle—though the wind could not bring it to the birth,  
—you shall have it—as the women tore the sobs out.  
Callirrhoë herself, so she find none to die for her, must  
die for scorn of Evius' priest.

It said the knife—

It said—through her milkless—— Oh, Machaon !

*Machaon.* I'm a favourite with the babies ; they're  
always for my shoulder. You see here's a big one  
requesting it. You're too old for a ride. What shall I  
do with you ? I'd laugh him into manhood.

*Demophile.* But we will die.  
I will die gladly, and who would not die ?

*Machaon.* Oh, doubtless many will give votes for  
death,

Writing a comrade's name upon the shell,  
Never their own, for that were insolent  
Self-choice in privilege. Nurse, not so fast.  
Think you Emathion will not joyfully  
Prevent you to preserve Callirrhoë.

*Emathion.* Who—I ? Why must it be her very  
blood.

Is there not one who loves her in this town  
Would succour her ? [*Silence.*] Or if indeed her blood,  
My uncle Cleitophon, I know your care  
And scrupulous observance towards the gods.  
You have been foremost in misguided zeal ;  
And now will doubtlessly desire to bear  
The chiefest penalty.

*Machaon (aside).* He dug his nails

Into my hand as vulture in its corpse.  
 But I'll not be the still prey of his fears.  
 Let him look to 't.

*Cleitophon.* Except one die for her !  
 Were not obedience most precise if she  
 Herself should die ?

*Aglauria* [*looking anxiously at Machaon*]. Well said ;  
 a substitute

Will never satisfy. Thalia asked  
 This onyx ring of me. I prize the hoop,  
 And gave instead chalcedony fair set ;  
 But ever on my finger jealously  
 She hath kept watch. Is it not laughable  
 To think the gods would take a shrunken thing  
 As you, or me, or indeed any one  
 But just the dainty creature of their choice ?

*Machaon.* Try them, Emathion ; you are young and  
 fair.

*Emathion.* She never would consent. You, all of  
 you  
 Refuse ? Why, uncle, I ne'er had a doubt  
 You would not by a decade forestall death.

*Cleitophon.* It is a pious maiden ! Shall we learn  
 How lies her will before we intervene  
 With fond, precipitate suggestion ?

*1st Cit.* Her will ! 'Tis settled she must die for us.  
 She dies ! She must ! she shall !

*Machaon.* And you speak reason.  
 We must not waver ; yet an instant pause.

Hold a brief council 'mong yourselves ; meanwhile  
I'll learn the exact conditions, truth's details,  
From this poor boy. Soon as we clearly know  
Th' ordained victim, we'll go fetch the priest.  
Misread a word o' the oracle, we lay  
Fresh miseries upon us. [ *Citizens talk apart.*  
[ *To Emathion.* ]

Look you here !  
She must not die,—  
Why, I would die to save her. Save I will,  
But never pander to a priestly fool.  
Go, bid her fly by the far entrance,  
And fly yourself,—there ! Change your feet to wings.  
And, nurse, prepare and have in readiness  
Old garments fitted to dress up escape.

[Exit Demophile.

Stare not so aimlessly ; address the crowd  
One moment, ere you flee.

*Emathion.* I cannot tell—I—I will die for her!

*Machaon.* You ! till the knife gleams,—but presumably—

Come, exercise your rhetoric ; the crowd  
Will tear you if you tender not the word,  
And promise instant reparation.  
Offer to die for her ! I'll see you safe.

*Emathion.* Good citizens,  
Behold me here a wretched, doomèd man,  
You thought to welcome a deliverer ;  
Suppliant I clasp your knees. Most faithfully

I served you, not neglecting any rite,  
 And for reward  
 Learn that this city must be purified  
 By blood—my sister's or——

*Machaon.*

He'll choke to death.

*Emathion.* My own,—

If none whom life abuses takes this means  
 Of ridding him of all its miseries.

*1st Cit.* We will not listen, we have died enough.  
 Come, we will bind you.

*Machaon.*

Softly, gentle friends,

Emathion misinterprets in his haste  
 To save his sister. 'Tis the girl must die,  
 If she accept not one to die for her.  
 Most manifestly she will never choose  
 Her only brother ; me she would but flaunt  
 As somewhat liberal in my censorship  
 Of certain phases of Olympië life.

A victim must be passive as a sheep,  
 Ba-minded, or he'll irritate. You all  
 Are well content Callirrhoë should die.  
 She will be well content. Yet ruffianly  
 To fright and bind her were inhuman. Pause,

[*To Emath.*]

Keep from her doors a moment's interim.  
 Prepare your sister. We will keep the brow.

[*Exit Emath.*]

SCENE II.—*Callirrhöë's Home. Enter Callirrhöë and Emathion.*

*Callirrhöë.* What says the oracle?

*Emathion.* The word is you must die, ere Calydon  
Be saved—except . . .

*Callirrhöë.* Why pause you? Give me all.

*Emathion.* One die for her. My uncle Cleitophon  
Refuses, holding precious his grey hair.

*Callirrhöë.* My brother, what said he?

*Emathion.* Callirrhöë, if you would have it so . . .  
If so . . . but yet . . .

'Twas your peculiar impiety,  
Slighting Coresus' love, that brought the town  
To this great pass. . . But if you'd have it so . . .  
Callirrhöë, have it . . .

*Callirrhöë.* None will die for me?

*Emathion.* Not Cleitophon; the elders were all mute.

*Callirrhöë.* It is not that.  
You will not die for me. Indeed, I thought  
The city loved me.

*Emathion.* My dear sister, think.  
Men love their lives. You know not how it hurts—  
The spectral crowd and the grim ferryman—  
Sharp from the burning sunshine and blithe youth.  
Come to Demophile's.  
My dearest, fly, and we shall both be saved.

*Callirrhöë.* My city—I will save it! Oh, be soothed  
Poor mother, bending o'er thy tortured babe;—



It will recover. You, Emathion,  
 Say to this people I in ignorance  
 Have wrought them evil, let them flock to see  
 The expiation.

*Emathion.* No. I'll never see  
 Knife near your breast.

*Callirrhoë.* Although you pierced it through,  
 Emathion, when I knew you could not die  
 To save me. Think'st thou I had suffered it,  
 My beautiful, so amorous of the light?  
 What, give my mother's only boy to death!  
 Not so. I was a little grieved you failed,  
 But so you failed at the palæstra once,  
 Itys proved stronger—was it possible?  
 And so I kissed you. Now I add farewell!

*Emathion.* Farewell, farewell! What would you  
 have me do?

What do you mean? To leave me raving mad,  
 To wander round the temple? Stay with me,  
 Stay with me, succour, teach me to escape!  
 I shall go mad. I'm like a lighted torch—  
 There's fire upon my head. Deliver me!

*Callirrhoë.* Vex not my few last breaths. Be serious.  
 Demophile will tend you faithfully,  
 Nay, dote on you. Think of Callirrhoë  
 Where she hath been most happy, by the brook;  
 And of my father, raising to his lips  
 My little twy-eared bowl.

*Emathion.* No, not like that;—

Lying in bestial death i' the midst of blood.  
 Well, you must love this taste o' the shambles, love it,  
 To choose it. There, they'll drag me. From the hill  
 I hear them shriek Emathion. 'Tis like  
 Actæon with the hounds about his heart !  
 Pull them away !

*Callirrhoë.* Emathion, be calm.  
 Fear not this people ; 'tis for me they cry.  
 You, by this secret portal shall escape  
 And take the narrow cliff stairs to the home  
 Of good Demophile, who ever watches  
 Her children's blanching faces. Stay with her  
 Till you see health's bright tincture on their cheeks ;  
 That is the sign that Calydon is saved,  
 And all at peace.

*Emathion.* You . . . ?

*Callirrhoë.* Think you have left me at the spinning-  
 wheel. [*Shuts and bolts the door behind him.*]  
 And that is true. A few more fateful threads !  
 The scissors blink on me. How very still  
 It is. They're waiting me. My little bed  
 Looks dreary, as they'd newly borne away  
 A corpse from it ; ay, and a maiden corpse,  
 No children crowd to kiss.  
 To give one's body, with its great desire  
 For love—the very love it's fashioned for,  
 As firebrand for the flame-tip—to be cut  
 Away from sense, so that unlovingly  
 Men will behold it ! Oh, my Hylia !

Death caught you sudden in a husband's arms !  
 He hath mistook his place—the rear of love,  
 Never the vanward. Shame on me ! They come !

[*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*A hill-side, Calydon ; on the opposite height  
 a troop of Mænads. Enter Coresus.*

*Coresus.* These lovely ranks I've marshalled for the  
 god,  
 And the plague-heaps o' the city ! Oh, it's vile,  
 That work ; it crazes me. All sights are turned  
 To madness ; all the deep tenacious loves  
 Drop from my life. Anaitis dead ; the faun—  
 And I had sought for him the whole night through—  
 My faun. I found him in a moony nook ;  
 So deep his slumber, an arbutus-bell,  
 Fallen on his lid, there lay ; a woodmouse curled  
 Asleep upon his breast ; the topmost lock  
 On's head hung loose as aspen-leaf to the wind.  
 Save for that little touch  
 Of life's disorder, I had feared, he lay  
 In stillness so deep-settled.—Were she hurt,  
 Hurt to the very quick ! All's well with *her*,  
 I'm left with my torn Mænads. I'd not live  
 To be the butt of my malediction,  
 But for the oracle,  
 The oracle, that yet may ruin her.  
 It's a way of tracking guilt down to the seed,  
 And the guilt's *her's*. My hands are stained with it

As the dyer's with the Tyrian—she's the stuff  
Red to the fibre. (*Enter Dione.*) What o' the oracle?

*Dione.* Oh, nothing of the oracle?

*Coresus.*

Then, indeed,

Nothing of note.

*Dione.*

The bleating children come

Up here. I find them wet-faced i' the cold.

*Coresus.* It's nothing; it's the plague.

*Dione.* No; the flesh was sound, but the face had a  
sort of cry in it. Methinks it died for its mother.

[*Enter Messenger.*]

*Messenger.* Oh, quick, Coresus, for from the oracle  
Emathion hath returned, and the word is, Cephalus'  
daughter must die for the insult done to Evius' priest.  
They've brought her to the altars. None will die for  
her. She's waiting. Quick! or she'll not feel it, if  
you're laggard.

*Coresus.* Will she faint?

*Messenger.* No; her face grows sharp and hard as  
sculpture. She must bleed. Oh, come to her! The  
plague will not budge while she's breathing.

*Coresus.* What! No quiver till the knife-thrust?  
Dionysus, I thank thee for this rare victim. All things  
to my hand. Yet 'tis possible she escape me. All's  
marred if one die for her. How said you?

*Messenger.* None will die for her; she, Callirrhöë,  
stands at the altar steps.

*Dione.* Callirrhöë! It's the girl with the blind father,  
that sings.

*Corseus.* Sings! Have you heard her of late, have you marked her?

*Dione.* To bring all this death! No marvel they'll not die for her.

*Coresus.* Peace, fool! The plague's mine. I own it. Did you say none would die for her? Deaf, deaf, the whole city full. O Dionysus, thou tormentest as a god!

*Dione.* The people perish. Think! they're innocent. Save them.

*Coresus.* The plague's mine; her blood's mine. I thirst for it. To uncistern her very heart! And to think one must get at it as at a beast's heart!—her heart—Callirrhoë's. See the great knife be sharp. To the altars!  
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.—*Demophile's house. A child in a cradle.*

*Enter Demophile with some clothes.*

*Demophile.* There they be—ancient hoods and coarse old wraps. This will hang about my girl; and there's a gown will sit on the sturdy doctor to the very life; an' this will muffle up the boy. I've kept the dingiest for the boy; he's so much beauty to hide. May they all prosper! The babe sleeps. My babes were all restless; but they rest now. [*Knocking.*] Who's there?

*Emathion* [*without*]. Nurse, nurse, nurse!

*Demophile* [*opening the door*]. All right, it is all right. Everything's ready.—But what haps that you look so wild and ashy? Is it well with her?



*Emathion.* No ; ill, ill !

*Demophile.* Would she not fly ?

*Emathion.* No, no. She wanted to die. It's against nature, but she wanted to die.

*Demophile.* Is she gone ?

*Emathion.* Yes, yes ! Shut the door ! She's no hinges like that ! You can't move her.

*Demophile.* 'Tis a brave lass, an' I'm glad my milk went to her making. An' you've left her to die, you wretched, puny brother ? Why, she'd have given you her blood like a pelican—the tender white thing she is ! When you slapt her in the face and I cuffed you, how she flushed up and coddled you with her cooing “There then.” Yes, hang your head and set your lips a-trembling ! I'm glad on 't. An' let me tell you, I never liked you, and to-day I think you're nothing but offal. I've a good mind to throw you out o' doors.

*Emathion.* O nurse, have pity ! Let me stay. She *will* die, and she sent me here.

*Demophile.* There's no time to spare. Be a good boy, a good, loving boy, and come wi' me to die for her. As the kernel's in the hard nut, is happiness in this hard death. If not . . . Will you come ?

*Emathion.* I dare not—I cannot ; and she sent me here.

*Demophile.* Then stay, and rock the babe—it's all you're good for. If I return not, take it to it's mother, Theron's wife. Mind what I say, and rock it.

[*Exit.*



CALLIRRHÖË.

*Emathion* [*dropping on a stool and rocking mechanically*].  
Oh, I'm unspeakably wretched. And this hateful  
child knows not, cares not, with its even humming  
breath and its eyes, like two doves' nests with sleep on  
them. I can't bear it! I must pinch the child to make  
it feel a little, feel pain with me. It shall not mock  
me; it shall be hurt like me, be miserable. [*Pinches it.*]  
There! But it does not content. I must out. I must,  
I must, I must see all! Her blood draws me like a  
cord to my ankle. They won't note me if I crouch  
down. And I must go, wretched, wretched Emathion!

[*Exit stealthily.*]

SCENE V.—*Without, afterwards within, the Temple.*

*Enter Callirrhoë, Machaon, Megillus, and Citizens.*

*Callirrhoë.* My people, I am come to die for you;  
Curse me no more. To-night in Calydon  
There shall be health and sleep.

*1st Cit.*

Hurry her on!

My children peak and pine, and I must watch  
My own good flesh I gave 'em drop away  
Like the patrimony of a prodigal.

*2nd Cit.* My father's eye was red

As embers on the hearth. Oh! let her die  
Before it is a cinder in his head.

*Old Man.* My arm's hot. Let her die  
Before my stomach burn, and then my pyre!

*Soldier.* Push on, push on, ye sluggards ! Swords and knives !

I'd make a quicker business.

*Sculptor.*

Ah ! superb

Her attitude ! With thong of her own fingers  
She's bound her arms back from surrendered breast.  
I've got a subject that will make me great.

*Woman.* The child is hot and purple as a fig ;  
It is my only child, and I am old.  
Oh, save it !

*Callirrhoë* I am ready.

[*Enter Demophile*].

*1st Cit.*

What a face !

Sickness and hurry do alternately  
Pinch and dilate its features. Let her pass.  
Here, woman, drop beneath my arm, just so !  
What news ?

*Demophile.* None, none . . . Oh, stop ! for I am  
come

To die, d'ye hear ; to die instead of her.  
Dear heart ! she's never had upon her skin  
Aught red but sticky bits o' sycamore—  
That she should have it dabbled with her blood !

*Machaon.* 'Tis the wet nurse !

*Callirrhoë.*

It shall not be. Your milk

Feeds the weak human grafts, the stranger shoots  
They put within your bosom. Mine's a fountain  
Which never hath received within its basin  
That it was formed to hold. *Demophile,*

You taught me first to walk, and now good nurse,  
You'll see how nicely I can walk to death.

*Demophile.* Her blood, her blood ! [*Faints.*]

*Callirrhoë.* This hand hath often held my clothes  
for me.

It must not hold them now. You do no service,  
Poor kindly fingers—loose.

*Machaon.* Your eyes are tearful.

*Callirrhoë.* It is giddiness.

*Machaon.* You stooped.

*Callirrhoë.* I'm straight. They crush me ?

*Machaon.* Off ! stand off !

*Acephalus.* The priest, where is the priest ?

*Callirrhoë.* He keeps me waiting !

*Machaon.* Brute !

*Callirrhoë.* Comfort my brother.

I used to nurse him when he cried. Machaon,  
Comfort him ; he hath need.

*Machaon.* 'Twere better far

Blister the inflammation of his terror

Than pacify with lenatives. Nay, nay !

I'll do it for your sake, Callirrhoë.

*Cleitophon.* Hail, my dear kinswoman, so glorified of  
the gods, so honoured in death, so dignified as a patriot,  
so sanctified as a mortal, so beatified as a maid !

[*Enter Promeneia among the crowd.*]

*Promeneia.* I'm sick and full of pain ; a fever runs  
Beneath my skin that's dried upon my veins  
Stiff as a bat's wing ; and my eyes—they feel

To bubble in the burning caldrons  
 O' the sockets. I'm o'er tired ; and yet, be brave,  
 Old sinews ! I will beat ye on no more  
 When I have seen Emathion. His sister !  
 I thought she'd all the graces o' the world  
 To be his sister.

*1st Cit.* By my word o' faith,  
 This is a cruel waiting.

*2nd Cit.* She looks sick.  
 He's never kept a beast so long.

[*Enter Emathion, creeping behind the crowd.*]

*Promeneia.* 'Tis he !

How like a god he looks !

Emathion, I am here.

*Emathion.* Oh, horror, horror !

*Woman.* Why don't her brother die ? [*To the child.*]

Hush-a-hush !

Mother will blow on thy hot little head.

Curse the slow priest ! [*Exit Emath.*]

*1st Cit.* Well said, dame. Let's haul up her brother  
 to the altar. We must pull him as an ox, for he will  
 walk not as a man.

*Promeneia.* You want to kill Emathion ? Kill me !  
 'Tis all the same, because of love !

*1st Cit.* Ho ! ho !

*2nd Cit.* Ha ! ha !

*3rd Cit.* Just listen ! An' he wants to live  
 To fondle her !—the beautiful Emathion !  
 Would marble mate with dung ?

1st *Cit.*

'Tis a strange world !

2nd *Cit.* Well, we must give him up ; but we'll not speak with him henceforth—only hoot at him, mock, howl, gibber, jeer, and execrate till his flesh shall be sore with shame, as a bull's hide with gad flies. [*To Prom.*] Come, you said you'd die.

*Promeneia.* For him. I will not move a step for her.—With agony my gums butt at each other.

I cannot stand.—Die you for her. She's nothing.

2nd *Cit.* Come on !

*Promeneia.* I will not die, I will not die ! Oh ! oh !  
[*Falls.*]

2nd *Cit.* A case of plague !

1st *Cit.* Away ! We're pressed on her.

3rd *Cit.* Let us be gone.

1st *Cit.* The priest ! He comes at last ;  
He'll stop infection ! [*Enter Coresus.*]

[*Pointing to Callirrhöë*] See, her pallor's red  
As painted ivory of a goddess' cheek.

2nd *Cit.* But the brown priest is pale.

*Promeneia.* Lonely and dying ! Hateful death, to steal

This weight of love away from my lock'd heart,  
Old chests are strong !

You shall not ; for I'll fight your each essay  
To turn the key ! And, oh, it is a fight  
Tears me to shreds !

*Coresus* [*to Callirrhöë*]. And will none die for you ?  
Have you no lover ?

*Callirrhoë.* For my people, I  
Come joyfully to die ; each breath I draw  
Delays deliv'rance ; choose where thou wilt strike.

*Coresus.* It is the heart hath sinned. Bare the right  
breast. *[Aside.*

Oh, lovely, snowy summit to the rock  
Of her hard heart !—Come near. Behold, ye people,  
This maiden-victim. Ye have sorely sinned,  
And so hath she, more deeply than you all.  
Your sins and hers are blacker than the soles  
Of a slave's feet, more vile. Then wonder not  
Heav'n sent this hungry-jawed voracious plague,  
This tiger of its wrath, to tear your flesh  
With teeth of maddening pangs.

*Promeneia.* Oh ! oh !

*Coresus.* Ye hear the cries  
That mark its savage feast. Repent ! repent !  
*[Emathion glides behind Promeneia,  
who seizes him by the foot.*

*Promeneia.* Emathion, water ! My tongue's leather !  
For you I'd drain the well o' my body. A little water !

*Emathion.* There's for your thirst, and curse you !

*[Strikes her dead with a blow on the temple.*  
They'll have me ; they're after me. I'm the pole to a  
tent of horror. It's all round me.

*[Exit running.*

*Callirrhoë* *[aside]*. My brother !  
Has he repented ? Does he come at last ?  
Gone, gone !



*Coresus.* Impenitence is man's foolhardiness  
Toward God.

*Citizens.* We do confess the Bromian ;  
Have mercy, Dionysus !

*Callirrhoë.* And forgive.

[*Coresus turns and looks at her.*

*Coresus.* Behold, great god, this people's humbled  
mind,

Forgive, and on their sacrifice be pleased  
To look with favour. They will worship thee  
As I have worshipped. They will drink thy wine  
As I have drunk ; will know and prophesy.

[*Aside.*] Oh, I unanchor—I must die—leave *her*.

[*Aloud.*] Callirrhoë, you are ready ?

*Callirrhoë.* Yes.

*Coresus* [*raising the knife*]. Accept  
The sacrifice !

My god, my god ! she's white as holy milk  
They pour on other altars ; thine must have  
Wine. I am dark, and liker wine than she.  
I'll keep thy ritual ! Behold, I pour !

[*Stabs himself.*

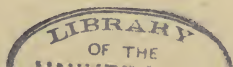
*1st Cit.* He struck wrong, see !—the priest !

*2nd Cit.* He struck himself.

*3rd Cit.* Yes, yes ; he'll bleed to death, dry up the  
stream

Of blood ; tis from his heart.

*Callirrhoë.* Nay, touch him not,  
I am his Mænad, I alone believe ;



Go quickly to your homes ; the god accepts  
The sacrifice. Cry Io for the god !

*Citizens.* Io ! Io ! Io !

*Callirrhoë.* He heard the cry, Coresus, your great priest.  
A rapture crossed him. Now he hears no more.

I may a little praise him. Calydon,  
Bear in your heart your high deliverer.

Swear ye will live no more to common ends  
Of food and toil and habit. Swear that here  
In condemnation of your petty lives  
There shall be mighty passions solemnized  
By masque and chorus, that all men may learn  
The wealth of such emotion as empowers  
To deed like this. All hail, Coresus, hail !

*Citizens.* We swear.

All hail, Coresus, our deliverer !

*Callirrhoë.* Now go home.

Go all of you, and see how fare the sick.

*1st Cit.* Let's see if they are mended.

*2nd Cit.* Run, run home.

*3rd Cit.* We'll go. Perchance the sick who died last  
night,

Will presently recover.

*1st Cit.* Ay, we'll see.

*2nd Cit.* And do you think my wife will live again ?

*1st Cit.* Who knows !

*Woman.* Oh ! the child's cooler.

*All.* Dionysus, hail !

[*Exeunt.*

[*Machaon goes up and looks at the corpse.*]

*Callirrhoe.* No hope to staunch that blood. Machaon,  
seek

Dione, tell her that I come to her

In the deep woods. Oh, tell her—break it soft—

The Mænads have no priest. [*Exit Machaon.*]

Ah me ! ah me !

How thou did'st ope thine eyes wide at the shout ;

And I looked down on thee and drank thy love.

I am a Mænad ; I must have love's wine,

Coresus, and you die before my face,

Leaving me here to thirst. I dare not mar

Thy holy death, mixing my fruitless blood

With this most precious, sacrificial stream.

Thine be this day's full glory. Oh, my dead, [*taking the*

Thus I despoil thee ! *knife*]

[*Exit.*]

[*Enter Emathion, creeping round the pillars ;  
advances to Promeneia's body.*]

*Emathion.* Hath she moved ? Oh ! she looks but a  
heap of wrinkled marl ! I thought not a corpse was so  
like soil. I had it in my mind to kiss her ; but she's so  
earthy, she'd crumble into my lips and choke me ! I  
meant but to say, "Be quiet"—no more ; but she took it  
so seriously. She's too brown ! But my sister is white.  
'Twill be fair to see. [*Advances to Coresus' body.*] What !  
Brown too—but smooth as clay ? Brown, and it looks  
not like her. I'm going mad, going mad ; for it looks  
brown and strange. Oh ! I'm mad ; for my sister looks  
not like my sister, and I'm her brother and should know ;

and I say it's not she, which proves me mad. Oh! I am mad, mad, mad! *[Re-enter Citizens.]*

*1st Cit.* Who's this wolf that smells the dead?

*2nd Cit.* Stone him off! 'Tis her brother!

*3rd Cit.* The coward!

*1st Cit.* Clap him, clap him; he's the hero of the day.

*Emathion* *[with a warning movement of his hand]*.  
Plague! Plague! Plague! Plague! Plague!

*[Exit.]*

*1st Cit.* He says "Plague!" Perchance the god hath shut it up in him.

*2nd Cit.* Well, I'm for Bacchus.

*3rd Cit.* The knife's gone,

*1st Cit.* Oh, he's ta'en it.

*3rd Cit.* He'd best use it! Death would be better than life now, if you'd give him the scales to weigh 'em.

*1st Cit.* O noble priest!

*2nd Cit.* O brave deliverer!

*[Exeunt with the body of Coresus.]*

*3rd Cit.* *[re-entering]*. We'd best burn the old stranger. No fear to touch her now. What's this on her finger? Hair!—a strange ring, i' faith! I know nothing about her. *[Exit with the body of Promeneia.]*

SCENE VI — *A Plot of Grass in a Wood.*

[*Faun dancing and singing*].

*Faun* I dance and dance ! Another faun,  
A black one, dances on the lawn,  
He moves with me, and when I lift  
My heels, his feet directly shift.  
I can't out-dance him, though I try ;  
He dances nimbler than I.  
I toss my head, and so does he ;  
What tricks he dares to play on me !  
I touch the ivy in my hair ;  
Ivy he has and finger there.  
The spiteful thing to mock me so !  
I will outdance him ! Ho ! ho ! ho !

*Machaon* [*behind the trees*]. A sight to shake the stiffest sides on earth !

'Twould force a misanthorpe to hang a smile  
Upon his lip, as dew-drop on a thorn.  
Plutus beholding this would fill with noise  
Of laughter all the hollow of his voice,  
So exquisitely laughable it is.  
'Tis one of nature's jokes she's mistress of.  
The little fool  
Tries to outcaper his own shadow. Ha !  
With what a pettish energy he springs,  
His forelock nodding to his sportive heels.  
Thus man toils oft for the Impossible

With earnest foolishness and sorry end.  
 But here's a jocund close to hopeless toil !  
 He's lying all a-grin because he lies  
 Upon his shadow, which he reckons caught.  
 Ha ! ha ! The very sediments of mirth  
 Are stirred throughout my nature. This gay knave  
 I'll question. [Parting the trees.

*Faun.* Ha ! ha ! ha !

*Machaon.* What have you caught ?  
 Something philosophers themselves can't seize  
 With all their definitions. We'll revere  
 One who has caught himself, and at his feet  
 Sit like small scholars. [Faun offers to run away.  
 Nay, you shall not go.

I'll make you talk first. You're a funny thing !

*Faun.* Oh, let me go ! I'll bite ! Oh, let me go !

*Machaon.* A natural philosopher, I see,  
 Apt with his mouth. I want to hear you talk.  
 For lies you are not keen enough. Methinks  
 The innocence of truth hath never fled  
 This simple mouth, though like a nested bird  
 It soon gets feathers, and betakes itself  
 Even from infant lips. Come, sit you down.

*Faun.* No ! no !

*Machaon.* Down with you. Why, you're on  
 the shade

That danced with you. He's under you ! Sit firm !  
 There's my good knave ; you see I mean no harm ;  
 And when you've told me all I want to hear,



Then dance away within the sun again !

*Faun.* I will not dance.

*Machaon.* No sulks, I'll have no sulks.

Come, tell me what you are, whether a boy  
Or but a boyish creature.

*Faun.* I'm a faun.

*Machaon.* And what is that ?

*Faun.* Why, 'tis a faun !

*Machaon.* Just so.

But then you're not a boy ?

*Faun.* I am a faun.

*Machaon.* His slow conception blocks my questions up.

Well, can you tell me how you were begot ?

Dropt from the womb of Nature, I should say ;

Or had you once a mother ?

*Faun.* I'm a faun.

*Machaon.* A truism, my rustic sage ! But how  
Did you become a faun ?—I'll try plain phrase.—  
Cannot you tell

Aught of your childhood,—of the time, I mean,  
When you were smaller ?

*Faun.* Oh, I danced as now,  
And crushed the acorn-cups, and ran the deer,  
Sucked the ripe mulberries, tossed the chestnuts up,  
As I do now, and . . .

*Machaon.* Yes, I understand.  
—O Eloquence, the tongue of Love, appeal  
To cherished memories of simple things,  
And thou art on the silliest of lips



*Machaon.* The knowledge of a brute. I hoped for more.  
What ! from this simpleton.—He loved your wood ?

*Faun.* He loves it, and he often plays with me, . . .

*Machaon.* How dull are the unfearing to suspect !

*Faun.* And bends the bough of the high fir for reach  
Of my hand wanting cones, and then he strokes  
The smooth back of a deer, and binds its neck  
With ivy-leaves, at which, oh, how I laugh !  
And then he laughs, and then I clap my hands.

*Machaon.* Hast thou seen any in the woods to-day ?

*Faun.* Two, with their noses on a mossy root,  
That looked at me, and . . .

*Machaon.* I meant any man.  
Hast thou seen man or maiden in these glades ?

*Faun.* No ! no ! He has not come so long a time.  
When will he come again ?

*Machaon.* No more, no more.  
—I'd better spell the manuscript of Death  
To these untutored ears. This ignorance  
So blessed in the present may afflict  
The future, with its wonder unallayed,  
That growing drearily, at last becomes  
The brutish misery that never knows.  
—He's dead.

*Faun.* Does that mean that he's angry with me ?  
Oh, I'll be good,  
If he will come again, and not be *dead* !

*Machaon.*—He'll melt my manhood ! It is strange  
most strange ;

The tongue of knowledge wags with sounding phrase :  
 Set ignorance to question, and it straight  
 Declines to lispings. I am childish-mouthed  
 Before this unschooled creature.—Come to me.  
 You will not? Nay, but I must have you near  
 If I'm to tell you what we mean by *dead*.  
 —I make too solemn preparations,  
 (Oh, cruel priestcraft of my tender dread !)  
 He's frightened. Brevity but cuts the flesh  
 Of our anxieties ; prolixity  
 Tears it. So I'll be brief.—  
 You said that you were sorry when in June  
 The hyacinths drop away ?

*Faun.*

Yes.

*Machaon.*

When they're gone.

You cannot get them back again ?

*Faun.*

I can.

Not for a while, but then their streaky buds  
 Shoot up, and soon they're all with me again.

*Machaon.*—Ah ! I must give a better rendering  
 From Death's old bone-grey parchment.—Right, you're  
 right !

The hyacinths blue the ground spring after spring,  
 Although with different flowers from those you bunched  
 In grasp too small last year. For oft your hands  
 Are greedy with the flowers ?

*Faun.*

No, for they look

Long-faced and tired, and do not smile at me  
 As when they stick straight up out of the ground.

*Machaon.*—A thread to guide me, through the labyrinth

Of his simplicity and ignorance,  
To the mid-chamber, dark and windowless,  
Where understanding lies !—The tired flowers  
Grow ugly, lose  
All likeness to the bells you jerked about  
So merrily when they were purple ?

*Faun.*

Yes.

When they grow tired, I lay them on the grass ;  
I love to lie upon the grass when tired,  
And then they go.

*Machaon.*           That going I call Death.

*Faun.*   But then they come again, quite fresh and gay.  
But I am tired, tired, tired !

*Machaon*—The thread is snapt, the labyrinthine way  
Blocked up with dulness.—Yet you want to know  
Wherefore Coresus cannot play with you ?

*Faun.*   Oh yes !

*Machaon.*           Then tell me, did you ever love  
One deer above the rest ?

*Faun.*

Oh yes !

*Machaon.*

—His yawn

Is to my heart's pain most medicinal.  
Tire often blunts the edge of sorrow's sword.—  
And did it ever cease to follow you ?

*Faun.*   One day it followed ; then lay down ; then up  
It got, and followed as I ran before.  
At last it lay, and would not stir, for all

I tickled its soft skin with chestnut-leaves.

It lay, and . . .

*Machaon.* It was *dead*!

*Faun* [*shuddering*]. It grew a heap

More nasty than an ant-hill, for it smelt!

*Machaon.* He knows the alphabet of Death; my task  
To make the grim idea creep through the signs  
As snake through blades of grass. Yes, I must form  
The sentence of man's doom, and teach to him.

*Faun.* I hate the wood about it; never dance,  
Or even go there.

*Machaon.* It was *dead*.

*Faun.* Perhaps

It's right again; I never go to see.

*Machaon.* I tell you it was *dead*.

*Faun.* Then it *was* dead.

*Machaon.*—How shall I lift the lid of his mind's chest,  
And empty it of Hope's sweet silver form  
That's been its tenant and glad prisoner?—  
Coresus thus is dead:

Just like your deer; dead, dead, just like your deer.

—He's all a-tremble; yet his frightened thought

Still dares a vain resistance, like a girl

Who whips the captor's arms. Ah me, ah me!

I dare not comfort him while still he doubts;

Silence is unbelief's best battle-field.—

*Faun* [*in a whisper*]. And is he brown and nasty, like  
the deer?

*Machaon.*—I can't pollute his memory with *Yes*!—



No, no. But he can talk no more, nor move,  
Nor ever come to play with you again.

*Faun.* He'll come with the next hyacinths?

*Machaon.*

No, no!

You never, never will be with him more,  
Or play with him again.

*Faun.*

Oh—o—h—h!

*Machaon.*

Belief

At last fills up the doorway of his doubt.—  
My boy!—A sob is coming, and the face  
Looks older now its lines of joy are bent  
To sorrow's converse will.—

[*Faun rolls on the grass and sobs.*]

Nay, do not cry.

Look, here's a cone. I'll pick you cones, and play.  
—O Death, how, like a cruel step-mother,  
You always put your spite in every joy!  
You've torn a great hole in the happiness  
Of this quite happy creature, which no stitch  
Of Time will mend completely.

*Faun.*

Dead, dead, dead!

Coresus, don't be dead!

*Machaon.*

I've got a cone;

I'll give it you. There! Try to love me, boy!

*Faun.* Coresus dead! Oh, oh! Dead like the deer.

The horrid deer that lay and smelt! Oh, oh!

Coresus, dead like that?

*Machaon.*

You'll love me?

*Faun.*

No.

Perhaps the deer's all right ! I'll see ! I'll see !

For then Coresus will be all right too ! [Exit.

*Machaon.* Go, have thy foolish way. Thy tears are dry ;  
I will not raise their flood-gate for the world.

Deception is the ivy of the mind :

I've cut

Its roots at his small brain, and it may hang

Greenly about it for a little while

Before it withers. I must budge, must hence.

Poor youngster ! Here's the very place his back

Made in the moss. Would he could lie and laugh

The shadow o' Death uncaught ! So Truth can curse :

I thought not it could put its sacred tongue

To such a use. Heigh-ho ! From this time forth

He'll have a different laugh. I must be gone ! [Exit.

SCENE VII.—*The Market Place in Calydon. Megillus  
and Acephalus meeting.*

*Megillus.* Good-day, these better times.

*Acephalus.* Better times do you call them ?—when  
the pyre-flames have threshed out our hopes, and left us  
but a chaff of cinders, whence the grain is gone to fatten  
Death. Better times, you say ?

*Megillus.* Beshrew they are ! We've apples, till the  
apple-trees look as if they were the work of Dædalus,  
that cunning worker in bronze ! Pears ! Why they are  
worthy to be ear-drops unto Cybele ; and so numerous

are they, she might change her ornaments a second. Many fruits, and few mouths. I would not wish to live in better times.

*Acephalus.* You might have borne no fruit yourself, in that you decline so to pears and apples.

*Megillus.* Forsooth, neighbour, the honey of prosperity will soon correct thy sourness. Look you! The town is clean. Yester-night the fiery teeth of Death consumed, save one, their latest corpse. In youth I never snuffed the air with keener enjoyment, nor knew it of so sweet a quality. Thanks to the great god, whose devout worshipper will I ever be!

*Acephalus.* And yet, Megillus, I'm an unbarbed arrow, with no children to carry me into the future.

*Megillus.* Pooh, man! To drive you through a body, and make you the parent of murder, rather than direct you to the bull's eye of your expectations. Our children sow not in our hopes; rather they take the spade and dig them up.

*Acephalus.* They may turn them o'er first; but in the end they fail not to throw the seed by twos or hundreds. I hold not with you; but you only had a girl!

*Megillus.* Leave we this. To-night they burn the priest who killed himself to 'scape killing a comely woman.

*Acephalus.* He did it in a fit.

*Megillus.* A most likely condition for so mad a deed.

*Acephalus.* Let us move on. Here comes a crowd.

[*Enter Emathion followed by citizens.*]

*Megillus.* On my faith, this is Emathion. I'll have a word with him.—How do you, Runaway?

*Emathion.* I shall roll, and tear up the ground; and I shall become all over like yellow clay. But don't mistake. I haven't got the plague! Pray you, do not go away from me, for no one's at home. I can't think where all are gone. Oh no, I haven't got the plague! You're running away!

*Acephalus.* Nay, only you do that.

*Emathion* [*pointing at a woman*]. She's there! Plague take her. Look! Did you ever see such a flat mouth! Was it made to swallow water, like a fish's? And she's trying to puff it forward for a kiss. Heaven help me!

*Woman.* Why should the young man insult me? I swear I'm not for kissing him, as he impudently asserts.

*Emathion.* I only struck as you might pat a horse—so, so, so! She's there! Water, water, water! Mark her! She's the locust o' my flower of life. So I pinched her—very gently;—so! And I got the plague; and they're all running after. What an eye she's got! When 'twas on the ground 'twas a glow-worm. You think me mad, but I know it's she. There's her one tooth, like a yellow stalactite hanging from the cave o' the face!

*1st Citizen.* He's lunatic. Young fellow, you need not mow at him; he's senseless to your faces, and methinks it's blasphemous.

*2nd Citizen.* Just look how he stares at yon olive-tree! It might be a grey ghost from his desperate countenance.

*Emathion.* Listen there! Hark! It's in the trees! They're moving! See! and they say she must die! Hark! It's quite clear now. Oh, the cursèd trees! And they will cut her throat. Oh, no, no, no, no! They'll cut mine! They've got hold on me. Good people, I've the plague!

*Megillus.* He raves of the oracle I should say.

*Emathion.* It's all about my ears; it's in the trees; it says that she must die. Again! But I'll not hear it! Yet the wind's everywhere! and they want to make me die!

*1st Citizen.* They drove him from the palæstra with hoots and mouthings. He cried as if he were a child again, till the breeze got up; and then he fell into a frenzy such as you behold.

*Emathion.* I'll fly to the Libyan desert, for there are no trees! To the desert! To the desert, before I've got the plague! I hope the people won't run after me—the wind would flap their clothes! To the desert! To the desert, where there are no trees!

[*Emathion and citizens exeunt.*]

*Acephalus.* Where are his kin, that he wanders thus at large?

*Megillus.* They say his eyes like sullen comets shoot menace at Cleitophon, and the old man hides from their malignity. Of his sister naught is known. She was not found at home, and the doctor Machaon is missed. Whoever would sail safely over this mystery, let him plumb it first. The young man was comely.



But his beauty is the mere skull of itself; and I'll swear I saw grey hairs on his uncombed head.

*Acephalus.* Beauty is a stuff the moths of ill soon fray. They eat it ravenously, and leave it shameful rags. Why, my boy lay on the bed with the tatters of beauty hanging all about his face; his mother screamed at him. And he did not deserve it as doth this madman. Oh, misery lays its eggs in loveliness. Itself eats, and bequeaths the remainder to its progeny—waste and decay, and wrinkles, and grey hair. Faith, Megillus, they be mighty big waves that capsize the mind; for billows have gone over mine, and yet it is afloat.

*Megillus.* The boat sinks sooner than the vessel. There is the danger of these small minds; over they tilt on a sudden. But ours are better built than such small craft.

*Acephalus.* Thine is a tough piece of shipwright's work. A sea of affliction would not affect its sailing. I'll home. Good-day, these better times. Munch your apples, and look at your daughter's urn. 'T will give you an appetite. [Exit.

*Megillus.* That man's gall is spilt all over his body. The day's still early, and the air is sweet as the breath of Europa's bull. I'll walk on with its fresh companion-ship. [Exit.



SCENE VIII.—*A Wood. Enter Callirrhoë, hiding some thing in her robe.*

*Callirrhoë.* Alone at last ; deep in the shady hills,  
The dark heights I have yearned for. Far below  
A pyre is burning. Leap, ye glowing flames,  
Leap up to me ! Coresus, it avails  
Nothing to heap thee with my proffered love.  
Do we lay food and wine about the dead,  
When the stiff lips are barred, to make amends  
For past refusal to the trembling mouth ?  
Had I done evil deeds, I might atone ;  
The gods are gracious, and make clean from guilt.  
But simply to have lived my summer through  
And borne no roses ! Nothing compensates  
For dearth, for failure, when the season's past.  
Ah me, ah me ! and he besought my love  
As wildly, passionately, as the dead  
Beseech their burial. My heart aches with tears.  
What do I see ? Far down that alley'd green  
Glimmers the statue of a human form ;  
Immovable it sits.  
The aspect is Machaon's ; yet I scarce  
Dare give him speech, so inaccessible  
He looks ; aloof in spirit, like a god  
Hardened against his suppliants

*Machaon (to himself).* The plague  
Had spent itself ; I clearly marked its course,

Tracked and predicted the returning health,  
 Dependent on no priestly sacrifice.  
 And yet what glory rested on the girl  
 Who could put life by for her people's peace.  
 And when he lay—Coresus—at her feet :—  
 I have watched many death-beds, seen where Death  
 Was the chief ministrant about the face,  
 Washing, and laying out the spirit's corse ;—  
 With him it was quite otherwise ; life there  
 Laid death to rest. It was rare dying, that !  
 Life uppermost at end of the hard strife ;  
 Death forced to terms in the ensuing peace  
 Involving full subjection. I have brought  
 Word to Dione of that death. Poor child,  
 I think she loved him ; when I said he died  
 To save Callirrhoë, she grew as white  
 As the white sheep-skin of her nebris-fringe,  
 And cried, "She was not worthy of his love ;  
 She never loved him !"

*Callirrhoë.*

False, false ; oh ! she lied

And bore true witness to me all in one.

I never loved him, *never*.

Confession is the bitterest penalty

When wrongèd Love is plaintiff. I confess ;

With this addition, that I love him now

With woman's rapture, when the man she loves

Is god for adoration. I am come

Humbly to supplicate I may receive

Initiation in the Bacchic rites,

And die his Mænad.

*Machaon.*                      It would please him best  
You should declare allegiance to the god,  
And make all Calydon subservient  
To the strange worship. Men acclimatize  
To new emotion rapidly ; it takes  
Time to develop custom. Clear the truth  
By uproar of the Asiatic band  
Concealed, and overclamoured.

*Callirrhoë.*                      You discern  
There is a truth ?

*Machaon.*                      Rather a mystery  
I would unravel. I have looked abroad,  
And learnt to use life deftly as a tool  
Keen-edged to execute my purposes.  
I had no pleasure ; I just won my ends,  
Toiled and was served ; there was no music born.  
Whereas these Mænads, eager as hot Pan,  
Catch up all life as the peculiar reed  
To make sweet passage for their spirit's breath ;  
And Nature leaves her shyness, shows her mind,  
This sullen Nature, laughing in my face,  
Like an idiot, his imbecility  
Made resonant  
By shrieking echo from the void within.  
Deep in the forest here, I found a faun  
Coresus loved ; I captured him, and tried  
To tame his wildness ; he would none of me,  
Was stubborn, restive ; when I made him feel

His master could not come to him again,  
The creature blanched and shivered, and fled scared,  
As though the news were mortal.

*Callirrhoë.*

Can it be !

A little, wizen body lies along  
Yon root o' hazel ; and a powdery heap  
Of bones is close about ; the hand still grips  
A horny cone that purple-patches it.

*Machaon.* Oh, bring me there ! He went to the  
dead deer.

[*They come to the hazel.*]

'Tis he ; and Death is spread all over him,  
Death that looks startled at itself, as if  
It had mis-settled, falling on a prey  
Unnatural to its appetite. Ah me !  
How brutal, coarse, and ignorant I stand  
Beside this sweet stray in humanity ;  
A thing so passionately gay, it seemed  
The fresh, warm juice that fills the hyacinth,  
And pulses sudden verdure through the pines,  
Leapt in his veins ; the laughter of the spring  
Flowed through him ; Nature's vehemence and Youth's  
Met in his rapture. Now I see him wear  
Death's hoary aspect, shrunken and defaced,  
The youth o' the world is gone.

*Callirrhoë.*

You say he loved

Coresus. I have never looked on one  
Who loved him, and I never loved him—Oh !  
Dione, you shall yet efface that word !

*Machaon.* Here is another sacrifice. For me,  
I taught this boy mortality, an art  
Of which he was most innocent.

*Callirrhoë.* Machaon, it is natural to die  
Wherever love is ; and Coresus gave  
To this poor faun the faculty of love  
That stirs the mortal craving. Be content !

*Machaon.* Coresus killed him !

*Callirrhoë.* If you'd have it so.

*Machaon.* Better a plagueful of the city dead  
Than this strange life miscarried ; 'tis as if  
A part of Nature were herself extinct.  
Coresus cursed all Calydon ; here, here,  
Machaon, is thy work !

*Callirrhoë.* Most surely here,  
Where Love hath made the great discovery  
Of Death, a grey coast she must civilize.

*Machaon.* Oh, never, never can man carry there  
The Hestian flames ; ne'er in the mother-shores  
Of our humanity include that realm.

*Callirrhoë.* Who dwell but with themselves grow im-  
potent :

They have no Past ; the Past is what hath been  
Other than now ; the Future is a guest  
Comes not to them  
Who will admit no novel influence.  
Such can but iterate themselves. It needs  
Heaven to transmute our days to yesterdays,  
And touch our morrows with the mystery



Of hope ; when men remembered and desired,  
Straightway they worshippèd. Machaon, be  
The priest of Dionysus.

*Machaon.* You forget ;  
They would reject me, mindful of my scoffs.

*Callirrhoë.* I know a way to win obedience.  
Go quickly ; gather the great scattered band.  
I will await you ; but the oath is sworn.

*Machaon.* I would not leave that little corpse, except  
To learn the secret how he came to die.  
I am Machaon, and still curious. [*Exit.*

*Callirrhoë.* Dead of Coresus' love, poor little one ;  
Dead, dead for him ? And he but stroked thy head,  
And showed thee kindness ; while for me, oh, see !  
I bring this from him.

[*Stabs herself with the sacrificial knife.*

We will both be dead,  
Dead with Coresus ! [*Dies.*

[*Re-enter Machaon with Dione.*]

*Machaon.* Dione, come to her ; look not so hard.  
She was the stillest girl in Calydon,  
Shy, and a little proud ; be pitiful.

[*Discovering Callirrhoë's body.*

Fool that I was to leave her to herself,  
And not divine she bound me to that oath,  
To steal to her Coresus ! Oh, my boy,  
Thou dost not lie so orphanlike ; 'tis well.

*Mænads (within).* Swiftly, ye Mænads, come to see  
this girl



Who brought the curse on Calydon ; leap down  
The rocks, encompass her !

*1st Mænad.* Yonder's his pyre !

That mounting flame ! She lit it ; murder her !

*Machaon.* Shriek on ; the quiet of the dead is safe  
As a babe's innocence.

*2nd Mænad.* She is our prey.

*Machaon.* A heap of leaves will shroud  
Safe from espial any woodland thing. [*Covers faun.*  
Fair vot'ries of the civilizing god,  
What delicate urbanity ye need !  
Dione !

*Dione.* He was our deliverer.  
See, there ! From that high ridge above the pyre,  
A flitting form—no bat's wing !—there again  
A Mænad tightens round her neck the coils  
Of a live serpent, pressing in the fangs  
Fiercely her finger-tips ;—these will not live  
Without Coresus.

*Machaon.* Bare her corpse and speak.  
For me, I'll watch them till the fever falls—  
I have great patience with delirium. [*Hides.*]

[*Enter Mænads.*]

*Dione.* This is a Mænad, see !

1st *Mænad*. Her hair is tressed.  
This face hath known no workings of the god ;  
It is an unsacked city. Ye are fools,  
Duped by a stolen nebris.

*Dione.* She came here

To join our company ; she would not die  
Till she had owned the Bromian, and bound  
One who was witness of the sacrifice,  
A mighty novice, to proclaim the king.

*2nd Mænad.* Where is he? Where? All men have  
mocked at us.

We have come back half-murdered from the town,  
Coresus hath forsaken us ; he thought  
No more of the barbarian women when  
The Greek's white bosom glistened Woe to us !  
Far are our homes across the sea, our priest  
Is slain. Woe, woe ! Our god delivers not.

*Machaon* [*advancing*]. Most mightily he succours.

Shame on ye,  
Doubting your great divinity, the while  
Cursed Calydon breathes the young spring-tide air.  
I saw Coresus die ; your great priest fell,  
As Semele sank glowing with the god ;  
Life flooded him ; he was immersed in life.  
The power  
That draws the white milk bubbling to your mouths  
From the hard scaurs, brake out munificent  
From kindled lips : this girl stayed not to weep,  
Stooped not to kiss her lover ; she stood up  
Pleading, inspired, prophetic, eloquent,  
Inciting the great multitude to praise  
The city's saviour and Coresus dead.

*1st Mænad.* She is a Mænad ; she is one of us !

*Machaon.* She would not slay herself where the great life

Had been laid down, though passionate to die.  
 She came here to the woods, and finding me,  
 Bound me to be your leader. Solemnly  
 I swore to bear true witness to the deeds  
 I had beheld. Believe me, I have looked,  
 Looked deep into your secret things, and own  
 The rustic deity who pressed the grape  
 A god that makes humanity august,  
 Fulfilling it with mystery and joy.

*Mænads.* We take you, we accept you as our priest.

*Dione.* The holy ritual . . .

*Machaon.* Shall be observed.

If man need god as his ideal self,  
 He needs the picture of his life sublimed ;  
 And we will put  
 Before men's eyes the picture of high deeds,  
 Their hearts will emulate. They shall see acts  
 Like hers, who poured her unpolluted life  
 A frank libation ; shall again behold  
 Coresus, with the sacrificial knife,  
 And how he sheathed it. We will praise the god  
 By sculpture of the deeds he hath inspired ;  
 Yet not in fixity, for you shall track  
 Each passion from its quick'ning to its pyre ;—  
 Desires that momentarily disclose themselves,  
 In chasmic shock, as the *Symplegades*  
 Rift to the Euxine, must be held apart,  
 As by Athene's cleaving arms, access  
 Forced to the inmost heart. In you I see

Human emotion, action in the rough ;  
Your agitated gestures shall become  
Rhythmic in tidal reflux, your hoarse shrieks  
Sonorous intonations. Ye shall dance  
And thunder in your mighty mountain hymns,  
While I recount

The Evian conflicts, victories, and ye,  
With glorious inroad of irruptive praise,  
In chorus shall conclude the chronicle.  
Do ye accept the doom, ye Bacchanals ?

*Mænads.* Take us, your garland-bearing company,  
Adown the heights ; their echoes shall resound  
With flute and timbrel, and triumphant shout.

*Machaon.* Soon as the sunrise vexes your closed eyes,  
Spring from your coverts ; rouse the sisterhood,  
And, parting into ordered ranks your band,  
Assemble here, that we, in solemn train,  
May bear this maiden down the wooded steeps  
Of Calydon for burial.

*Dione.* The faun ?

*Machaon.* Hush, hush !  
I'll bury him at day-break in the wood  
While the dew keeps all quiet. Now, begone.

[*Exeunt Dione and Mænads.*

The white troops through the moonlight steal away ;  
The last pale nebris glimmers on the hills.  
Now can I bare myself  
To the white skin o' my spirit unto thee,  
Great Evius !—finding not the wherewithal

To worship by the altar, but in life.  
As I am Bacchanal, I will relax  
No effort till mankind be broken in  
By discipline of pleasure to true want  
In commerce and in dream.—There is a stir  
I' the heap of leaves. A few more silver hours,  
And I must put them both away from me ;—  
Callirrhoë  
Must go to her Coresus ; and the boy—  
I'll lay him in the sunny grass-plot, where  
No other faun shall vex him with its dance.





FAIR ROSAMUND.



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

HENRY, *King of England.*

WILFRED DE LACY, *a knight.*

JOSE DE LACY, *brother to Wilfred.*

SIR TOPAZ, *an old knight.*

MAVIS, *an architect.*

MICHAEL, *Keeper of the King's forest.*

ELINOR, *Queen of England.*

ROSAMUND, *foster-daughter to Michael.*

MARGERY, *foster-sister to Rosamund.*

BEATRIX, *betrothed to Wilfred.*

ELLEN GREENE, *a witch.*

*Masons, Courtiers.*

SCENE.—*At Woodstock and London.*



## PROLOGUE.

### CHORUS.

As toiling Hercules forced Hell's grim door,  
And viewed the nether mysteries of fate ;  
So doth the buskin'd Muse of tragic lore  
Burst through the ancient adamantine gate  
That gives to night the secrets of the past.  
Listen ! She opens rounded mouth to tell  
A thing, unguessed before—revealed at last.  
She whom our first Plantagenet too well  
Loved, and for whom he built the marble maze,  
Was no rich crimson beauty of old line,  
As fabled in proud histories and lays ;  
No Clifford, as 'tis boasted ; but, in fine,  
A girl o' the country, delicately made  
Of blushes and simplicity and pure,  
Free ardour, of her sweetness unafraid ;  
For *Rosa Mundi*—of this truth be sure—  
Was nature's Rose, not man's : as ye shall see  
In this sad tale of lovers' destiny.





# FAIR ROSAMUND.

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## ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Woodstock. Masons raising the Labyrinth.*  
*Enter at a distance King Henry and Mavis.*

*1st Mason.* Yonder is the King.

*2nd Mason.* He's aged of late.

*1st Mason.* Ay, ay ! about the face ; his fiery hair  
Is dimmed as if by smoke ; his hollow eye  
Is like a haughty general's retreat.  
Yet is he stout in body, well-nigh young.

*2nd Mason.* Some note he stoops a little i' the back  
Since he was whipped in church.

*1st Mason.* Dare-devil, peace !  
He's straight enough ; it is the monks that squint.

*2nd Mason.* Mum, mum !

*1st Mason.* Why, wherefore ?

*2nd Mason.* 'Cause the sun's come out  
That wakens us to labour in the glance  
O' Master Mavis' eye.

*Mavis.* My gracious liege. . . .

*King Henry.* Thou hast a spider's entrails for thy brain,  
To spin me such a web.

*Mavis.* Upon that Cretan wonder did I think,  
That held the misbegotten Minotaur,  
Until—so worked my fancy on its shape—  
Abortive circles built I airily,  
And founded hoary walls as in a dream.  
I entered the dim vistas, saw above  
The ribboned sky  
Blue as the fillets of a troop of girls.  
'Twas magic certainty directed me  
To the mid-chamber, straight as arrow takes  
The eye o' the target; and Conception stood  
Above my dreams, their secret thoroughly solved.

*Sir Topaz.* I take it, Master Mavis, that you are what  
they call a genius, for your talk is warm as a summer's  
day.

*Mavis.* I spoke too freely. Pardon, gracious sire.  
There's many a page within the head our tongue  
Should skip as reader.

*Sir Topaz.* Now I do believe I've touched some quick,  
and given some un conjecturable pain. On my faith,  
good fellow, I know not what I have done. My apology  
is an infant—'tis that innocent.

*Mavis.* Oh, nothing, sir. 'Twas I that cut myself  
With a knife that's in my mouth.

*Sir Topaz.* Pardy, I'm grieved to the heart if I  
offended. And 'tis so fair a building—a very rose—you've  
carved on the ground.

*K. Hen.* A what ?

*Sir Topaz.* So many curves, circular and broken, I said, sire, the building was in that respect like a rose.

*K. Hen.* Oh, ay ! the garden rose, our cultured rose, That's folded up in crimson like a queen.

Ay, ay ! Then, Master Architect, I'd know  
How many days before your labour's close ?

*Mavis.* Five, gracious liege, if every sinew work  
From dawn to midnight, spite of curfew's toll  
Above the hooded forest ; on such terms  
Will incompleteness yield.

*K. Hen.* And such we grant,  
Though hard upon your craftsmen and yourself ;  
Necessity is on her knees to us  
That we should use ye harshly.

*Mavis.* Be it so.

*Sir Topaz.* Ah, ah ! He'll be right glad when 'tis finished.

*Mavis.* No ; for my toil hath flushed Time's languid  
cheek.

*K. Hen.* I'd have ye mark yon varlets ! Make them  
skip

With energy of blows, and never spare.  
Each moment is my prey the dogs should seize ;  
I will not brook the loss.

*Mavis.* Your servant, sire

[*Moves towards the masons.*]

*K. Hen.* Sir Topaz. . . .

*Sir Topaz.* Sire.

*K. Hen.*

I think you never married?

*Sir Topaz.* Nay. Nor have I within me that which could be quickened into the desire.

*K. Hen.* So proof against the arrow-headed pangs?

*Sir Topaz.* 'Tis thus. The woman-child died I loved as a lad, and my love never grew after. 'Tis a little thing of her size.

*K. Hen.* Oh! then you know Love's root as well as flower;

The hidden cords that darkling bind the heart  
With hungry vehemence and never loose.

Oh! they may pluck and smell the joyful red  
Of golden-scented blossom, call it love;  
But there are fibres down, down in the depths,  
That never shall be moved, by which it lives.

*Sir Topaz.* Constancy . . .

*K. Hen.* I did not speak of that, I spoke of love  
When planted in the red soil of the heart;  
Of its insatiate girth; of Rosamund,  
And how she's everywhere about my soul.  
I think I told you once how first we met.  
She gathered cherry-blossoms, and I bent  
The bough to her; when, lo!—just where they bunched—  
Whitest, there hid a little hand more white,  
I kissed it, and her upturned face grew white  
To swooning, and the breath stood at her lips.  
I longed to be a soul from Holy Land,  
With shrift won at the Holy Sepulchre;  
To touch her flesh made me a penitent;

The pressure of that kissing broke the seal  
To all the wine that filled the stony jar  
Of my unused past. To her I was  
No king of men—only the great Lord Love,  
To whom she gave, as she were born to it,  
Unthinking loyalty. I've never known  
Such homage, only sullen tolerance  
And darkest-featured hate.

*Sir Topaz.* My dear liege, you have ever made light  
of your griefs.

*K. Hen.* Because I was a loveless man and blind.  
Vain, flippant men have tied round Cupid's eyes  
The badge of their own shame ; his heavenly orbs  
See fairest things where others scarce see fair,  
Behold in darkness sooty hells more deep.

*Sir Topaz.* Sire, these words afflict me beyond speech.  
Is there any service you can put me to, aught you can  
trust to an old man's care ?

*K. Hen.* Yes, yes ; my love, the bright gold of my  
heart,  
Be thou its treasurer,—be that which I  
Would give my heart to be.

*Sir Topaz.* Warden of the labyrinth and guardian of  
the lady ! With joy, and in all fidelity.

*K. Hen.* 'Tis well ; I shall remember. But to give  
This charge unto another is as hard  
As to pull life and arrow from the breast  
Together. Sooth, I am too heavy-souled  
That I should stumble 'gainst thy kindness

With such a clown's heel of ingratitude.  
 O honest Topaz, as complete my trust  
 In thee as is my perfect love to her.  
 Full well I know thou'lt dragon all my wealth,  
 That none shall be enriched. Yet solitude  
 May gyve thy days as iron. Will it? Speak.

*Sir Topaz.* Oh, I'll marry Seclusion for the sake of  
 getting famous progeny—Meditation—Peace.

*K. Hen.* Why should I ask? Was it a country lass?

*Sir Topaz.* What lass?

*K. Hen.* She thou didst . . .

*Sir Topaz.* Ay, ay!

*K. Hen.* So long ago! and after all at peace!  
 Come, we must hasten back. Ho, Mavis, there!  
 Five days!

*Mavis.* As said, so be it, gracious liege.

SCENE II.—*Woodstock, by the Forester's hut. Enter  
 Rosamund and Margery.*

*Mar.* 'Tis wonderful to see 'em dance . . .

*Ros.* And strange

That I may never see an elf, although  
 I roam at evening underneath the trees,  
 And love their crumpled gloom,

*Mar.* Oh, you should see!

*Ros.* Ah, if I could. What is it in thine eyes?  
 Why, 'tis their magic black, the naughty hue



Beloved  
Of shy hob-goblins.

*Mar.* You are blue, and safe?

*Ros.* Safe from enchantment? Yes, or nearly so.

I never see the fairies.

*Mar.* Secretly

You take that light green path,—I've seen you there,—  
An' look behind you ; an' I laughed and thought,  
"She thinks none sees the elves dance but herself."  
I've watched for you as weasel from its hole,  
Behind the mossy wall, an' dare not speak,  
You came along so new and wonderful.  
It must have been the elves.

*Ros.* Go, Margery ;

The fire is low, and father's supper-time !

*Mar.* He likes you best to wait on him.

*Ros.* Peace ! go !

[*Exit Margery within.*]

I'm fretful . . . and my father turned  
Once, when we stood together by the door,—  
We always settle in the sunset so,  
And do not speak,—that night he turned and went  
Into the house, as I had not been there.  
My heart stood still to hear him . . .  
Henry !  
The old when lonely must be very lone ;  
They sit and watch so patient by the fire,  
And there is none to come to them save Death.  
I'll back directly, for I love him more

Not less, though I'm so hard, with better love,  
Bright coin—the king's face shining on it clear—  
Not the worn pieces. Yonder is the beech !  
I play sometimes when it is very long  
Wi' the tiny urns, and say they hold my tears.

[*Exit behind the trees.*

[*Enter Wilfred.*]

*Wil.* This must be the hut—the nest of sticks where  
is found the King's dove. Ha, ha ! famously said.  
But I saw him, like a hawk, and his pigeon can't escape.  
I spied him, and 'twill make my fortune with the Queen.  
Down in the midst of the trees he toyed with her and  
kissed her—pat !—as I looked. Ha ! ha ! I saw but  
little of that joust of lips, the crimson couples tilted too  
far off ; yet I was witness, and my fortune's made. I'll  
knock, and use my eyes. [*Knocks.*

[*Enter Margery from within.*]

Fair damsel, pardon me ; such sudden light  
Is dazzling—

*Mar.* Please you, enter sir ; the sun  
Shines as one cannot bear it on the face.  
It's dark inside.

*Wil.* [*aside*]. The blessed simpleton !  
What eyes !—to stir one's blood—and shapely cheek,  
As brown and red and dimpled as an apple.  
We'll have an hour together in the wood.

[*Aloud*] Your father is within ?

*Mar.* He's late to-night.

*Wil.* Has he a fair young dog ?

*Mar.* Our Blanche has pups.

I play with them.

*Wil.* No other playfellows?

*Mar.* What, have you guessed?—the fairies!

*Wil.* On my soul!

Do you dance with them? Tell me where they break  
The ring to let you in to be their queen.

Ay?

*Mar.* By the beeches.

*Wil.* Where the old wall lies  
Half ruined?

*Mar.* Yes.

*Wil.* At this end or at that?

*Mar.* Right yonder, all among the elders there.  
You'd never see 'em. They are very shy,  
I fancy. But they like me; so I'd make  
A little cap each. Look! I'm sewing it.  
This bit o' red. I see you wear red, sir.

*Wil.* A plume of red, but this is iron mail.  
I'll let you handle it.—Ah! who comes here?  
Who's that?

[*Re-enter Rosamund.*]

*Mar.* My sister—and so beautiful,  
You'll like to see her.

*Wil.* Little hypocrite!  
You've got too bright an eye to wish it matched.  
[*Aside*] Oh! but she's beautiful, and yet withal  
Too self-sufficient; one of Nature's prudes,  
Who wrap their beauty round them as a cloak,

Nor wave it as a veil. This browner girl  
Is Nature's very wanton—will be mine.  
[*Aloud*] Good even. Shall I say it is mischance  
Compels me speak of business that would be  
Of interest to your father, though to you  
Indifferent—or Heaven's peculiar grace  
That gives me vision of two lovely maids  
Who came to choose a setter?—for I've heard  
Your father breeds such.

*Ros.*

It is accident.

I'm sorry father's out. Yet since I come  
To lay his supper, I can give you hope  
You have not journeyed bootless. Sit, sir knight!

*Mar* [*aside*]. Sir knight!

*Wil.*

Nay, rather kneel—thus.

*Ros.*

Compliments

Are here ill-breeding. We are simple folk,  
And I am no court-lady.

*Mar.*

Rosamund!

But very pretty.

*Wil.*

Ladies! Name them not;  
There is not one to match you. Why, the heaven  
Of your green vesture sets desire to think  
On the globing water-lilies underneath  
Their buds' enthrallment; while my city dames  
Trick the round swell with gauds and broidery,  
Befooling eager gaze—

*Ros.*

I'm maiden, sir,  
As well as no court-lady.

*Wil.* I'll affect  
Clownishness, if it please you.—I will watch  
Yon forester until I'm churl in full.

[*Enter Michael.*]

*Michael.* Ay, ay ! how now, wench ?

*Ros.* Father ! . . .

*Wil.* [*aside*]. Why, her eyes  
Flash to him as the lightning to a stump ;  
And yet she is the minion of a king !

*Mar.* He wants a dog.  
He's a sir knight.

*Mich.* Ay, ay ! the least of the pups.  
He shall not have the brown one with a star.

*Wil.* Old man, I'd see your dogs—for such you  
breed,

The country-side allows, as none about.

*Mich.* Your honour's servant and King Henry's slave.

*Wil.* 'Tis for the Queen.

*Mich.* Her humble slave. I've got  
Some few behind the hatch.

*Wil.* I'll come.—You've bred  
The fairest daughters of the country-side.

*Mich.* Oh, ah ! the brownie's mine. It was a wench  
Like nuts I wedded, an' so full of prayers  
I always had my luck. The comely one—  
Why, she's my fosterling : her father, sir,  
A man-at-arms ; her mother ! never saw  
So fine a woman—just as red and white  
As any lady born. I'll ask you, sir,

To step behind. An' girls, for shame, go in !

[*Exeunt Wilfred and Michael.*]

*Ros.* Margery !

*Mar.* I cannot come. I'll creep  
Behind 'em.

*Ros.* No ; it is not maidenly  
To be so free with strangers.

*Mar.* What a man !  
With such big, ugly cheeks, like father's bull ;  
And did you see his great damp curls, an's eyes ?  
Such eyes that roll about you—

*Ros.* Margery,  
Be quiet ! He's a wicked man. Don't speak  
About his face.

*Mar.* He's nasty ; but he talks  
As kind as can be for a gentleman.

*Ros.* [*aside*]. O Henry ! [*aloud*] They are coming  
back. We'll go.

[*Exeunt Rosamund and Margery.*]

SCENE III.—*Winchester: a room within the Palace.*  
*Enter Queen Elinor and the Princes Henry and Richard.*

*Queen Elinor.* Upon the yellow ground of Africa  
Young lions tear each other ; so these sons,  
Whom I, above all women, in my pride,  
May proudly claim my offspring, wage a strife  
Each against each. I care not. 'Tis the blood  
Insurgent of their equal parentage.



*P. Henry* [*to Richard*]. Ud's death ! Thou wilt defy  
me to my face,

Deny my birthright and my crown's right too,  
Because, forsooth, we're brothers—you who crawled  
Behind me into light, who took the path  
Which *I* discovered, in that very act  
Sealing yourself my follower—bound to keep  
A year's step lower in the court of Time ;  
You to whose brow no golden circle gave  
It's pledge of loyalty ; you, you to brag !—

*Q. Elin.* Urged like my own young monarch.

*P. Rich.* Glorious fool !

That cannot match a thunderstorm in noise  
For all thy clapping lungs ! I'll sing you still.  
My blood is wine that ran from the same press  
As your bright liquor ; and the vessel !—see,  
I'm broad and tall as you ! Ay, mother ?

*Q. Elin.* Yes.

My thumb's nail taller.

*P. Rich.* Holding so much more

Of the blue juice of royalty. Nay, nay ;  
Ennoble not your heels—those labourers  
O' the soil. It were a shame.

*P. Hen.* I'll make yours fly.

*P. Rich.* Why then my knees would stand.

*Q. Elin.* The lion-heart !

*P. Rich.* Yea, get me prone, my spirit still would rise  
Erect before you, spite of the false show.  
Kill me—I'd face you as a spectre tall

With chin that topped your mouth.

*Q. Elin.* Divinely bold !

*P. Rich.* I'll never yield in heaven, on earth, in hell.

*P. Hen.* Thou shalt by everything immovable,  
The throne of God and Satan's iron roof !

I swear thou shalt.

*P. Rich.* By all that never yields,  
The punishment of fiends and sinners' dole,  
I swear I never will.

*P. Henry.* I've sworn.

*P. Rich.* But I  
Swore many days ago. Ha, ha, my oath  
Is first-born and the heir of Fate.

*Q. Elin.* Well put,  
My own young warrior.

*P. Hen.* I'll turn the edge  
Of thy own sword against thee, as I live.  
In Aquitaine  
Bertram de Born, the troubadour, is mad  
Beneath thy scorpion rule. I'll use his rage——

*P. Rich.* Offal !

*P. Hen.* Then shalt thou eat of it.

*P. Rich.* Sweet cook !

*Q. Elin.* Ha, ha !

*P. Hen.* S'death, I will waste no further threats—  
No comets of my passion—but thou'lt know  
Destruction and remember how they flared.  
I'll to De Born.

*P. Rich.* And I to Aquitaine.

*P. Hen.* [*shaking his fist*]. My sign of parting.

*P. Rich.* Mine.

*Q. Elin.* Now here's a cheek

For each—and kiss me both together—so,

My mouth is herald 'tween the lips arrayed

In double line of battle on each side.

Farewell—Farewell! Thank God you have repaid

My flesh and blood in you with usury.

*P. Hen.* I'll force his homage.

*P. Rich.* I'll bring down his pride

*Q. Elin.* They feed my heart! [*Exeunt severally.*

[*Enter Beatrix.*]

*Beatrix.* Your majesty.

*Q. Elin.* Oh pray

For motherhood; it is the golden thread

On which are strung the ages——

*Beat.* Gracious Queen!

*Q. Elin.* Time works within our wombs as in the  
depths

Of earth the miner. There are found the gems

He wears before the light, and there the dross

That makes the dull pile of oblivion.—

Well?

*Beat.* I am bidden ask your instant leave  
To hear De Lacy speak——

*Q. Elin.* You velvet moth,

Of you? I will not listen to his suit.

He only lures with flame to drown in oil

Of dull neglect. Man's lamp of love is set

Ever to such low issues.

*Beat.*

Not of me—

Of matter fitting but your private ear  
He chafes to speak. My dearest sovereign, you  
Should hold so stout a liegeman in regard,  
Your service is his very stuff of life,  
The yarn of all his time. He would be nothing  
Without your favour. The King loves him not.

*Q. Elin.* Oh, the King loves none.

*Beat.*

I fear he's deep in love.

*Q. Elin.* The King in love! It was my hope that  
morn—

You rode the spotted palfrey—I the grey—  
My bridegroom with the bright half-rubied hair—  
Woman, you must remember how we saw,  
Our lover on the knoll, above the bend  
O' the road, ere he was 'ware of us. Ah me!  
You bring me news my Henry is in love?  
His youngest lad  
Is in his teens—in love?

*Beat.*

Then shall I call

Sir Wilfred?

*Q. Elin.* Call him? Ay; he has a throat

[*Exit Beatrix.*

That's loud, and shame must have a trumpeter,  
Or never march at all.

[*Re-enter Beatrix with Wilfred.*]

[*To Wilfred.*] The King's in love—

With you or me?

*Wil.* Nay, 'tis a snooded girl  
Down i' the country, coloured like a rose.  
I burn as hell to speak it—how they kissed  
And hung together——

*Beat.* Mercy !

*Wil.* In a wood—  
He pressed her to his heart with panting voice  
That out-ran language.

*Beat.* And the little wretch ?

*Wil.* Was eager as a devil.

*Beat.* Fie, I'm sick  
Of horror and disgust.

*Q. Elin.* Thank God for boys !  
To have reared a treasonous brood from his own blood,  
To have it at my call ! John laughs in 's face ;  
'Tis a fierce pup  
My first ; he'll fasten where I bid, relax  
When Death or I cry Loose ; Oh, I am glad  
To have the record of those ancient moods  
Writ clear  
In my boys' faces. That first ecstasy  
Of anger, then the weak drift of despair  
In puling Godfrey. From a fire of tears  
Leapt out my Lion-heart !  
When I again conceived, my flesh was cold,  
I bred a coward !

[*To Wilfred.*] Come, a covenant ;  
Join hands ! . . . My Beatrix,  
I toss her, a bright posy from my breast,

The day, the very hour, I've smoothed *her* limbs.  
 This . . . Let me loose on her! . . .  
 Speak fast ! Direct me ! I have sown i' my sons  
 The whirlwind of my nature ; he will reap.  
 This doe of the forest—my peculiar prey—  
 With silver-arrow'd death she must be pierced ;  
 The wrongèd Dian must behold her bleed !  
 I have not shared the King's love o' the chase ;  
 It 'gins to stir in me.

[*Enter Henry.*]

My lord, these twain  
 Have kept me all the morning with their loves.  
 Will you not bless them ?

*K. Hen.* Love alone can bless :  
 Not kings.—Sir knight,  
 Be merry. Of twain studies one must be  
 For ease, one for attainment. You'll pass days  
 Too strenuous at task with life and love.  
 Love therefore as a pastime,—this fair dame  
 Your mistress of the revels. Joy to each !

[*Exeunt Beatrix and Wilfred.*]

*Q. Elin.* A pastime ! From experience you speak ?

*K. Hen.* I never have concerned myself with love.  
 Where's John ?

*Q. Elin.* Why, with his retinue of fools.  
 Best set an ape  
 Before base things, since whatso'er he sees  
 Must fall a prey  
 To the antics of his visage. Do you need





The violated seasons to confer  
 Each his peculiar catastrophe  
 Of death or pestilence—*Embraced my lands !*  
 I'll shatter you  
 As Nature shatters—you, as impotent  
 As the uprooted tree to lash the earth  
 That flings its griping roots out to the air.  
 And plants it burgeoned summits in the soil.  
*Embraced my lands !*—Ah, I forget myself—  
 The loveless are insensate to presage ;—  
 'Tis in calamity's harsh stubble-field,  
 They learn to suffer. I'll be harvester,  
 And sickle your ripe joys. *Embraced my lands !*  
 Had you embraced me, I had borne you fruit  
 Of soft-fleshed children. Hug the progeny  
 Of your stony lust, and curse me! [*Exit.*

*K. Hen.* She forgets—  
 When she is gone,—dear bliss !—the thought of her  
 Lies not a stinking corpse about my heart.  
 The loved or loathed may haunt us. Who *oppress*,  
 Are mortal in remembrance : being past  
 As sultry day that kept the air in bond,  
 I can breathe free. How beautiful  
 To have the mind a solitude for love !  
 Mine's clamorous as a camp—one silken tent  
 Close-curtained, secret . . . Rosamond !

[*Enter Courtier.*

*Cour.* A man  
 Would see you, sire,—a haggard, bright-eyed knave,

With rapid tongue.

*K. Hen.*

I know him. Bring him in.

*[Exit Courtier.]*

The architect

*[Re-enter Courtier with Mavis.]*

We would be private. Go.

*[Exit Courtier.]*

*Mavis.* 'Tis done, and this the eve of the fifth day.  
All ready.

*K. Hen.* Come within. Yon door hath ears  
Of human shape. Be dumb ! This very night  
I'll ride with Topaz to the Oxford woods.  
Come, follow ! thou dost pant ; I'll give thee wine.

*[Exeunt within.]*

SCENE IV.—*Woodstock. Moonlight. Rosamund asleep  
under a beech-tree. Enter on the other side Michael.*

*Mich.* Ay, 'tis a fair night—as much day as can be,  
only a bit dark i' the corners like. 'Tis warm, too, for a  
night o' May—wonderful soft and dry.—Now what is the  
dog a-snuffing at ? Here, Blanche, here ! We must stop  
for no game. . . . 'Tis late belike, an' the wenches  
are a-bed.

*[Enter King Henry behind the bushes.]*

*K. Hen.* Is't a hobgoblin, this black, crooked shape ?  
The dog that snuffs about yon single drift  
Of snowy womanhood, a thing bewitched ?  
I will protect her from all enmities.  
Stand !

*Mich.* Robbers, robbers, robbers ! I'm trapped ;  
I've naught !—God help ! *[Exit in flight.]*

*K. Hen.* 'Tis only some belated peasant. There !  
He's gone.—She sleeps as innocence, and I  
Her lion-shield. So young—so still ! O Sleep,  
Thou lover pressing closer while we live,  
Than any other bedfellow on earth,  
I'm jealous of thy hold on her dear limbs,  
Thy intimate warm clasp. Ah, but she dreams !  
Divine to watch  
The course of her dreams, and by the rising flush  
Mark the king's entrance. Soon as she awakes  
I'll worship her !—in worship's fiery clime  
Desire 's a child audacious, innocent,  
And knows not it is naked. Sweet, so close,  
And I can let thee fondle with my shade !  
One kiss, the trembling whisper of a touch,  
And we're together ! *[Kisses her.]*

*Ros.* Prison ! No,—there's air !  
O Henry !

*K. Hen.* Love !

*Ros.* You left me desolate,  
And in a prison. Still mine eyes are wet  
With their leave-taking tears.

*K. Hen.* What, weep to-night,  
Your birthday ? Rose, you are a woman now ;  
You love the king—how much ?

*Ros.* The stars must count.

*K. Hen.* You'd do me homage, Rose,

Were you the lady of broad lands ; what vows  
Shall I require of you who hold in fief  
My heart's wide realm ?

*Ros.* I give you of myself  
All, all there is—and for the rest, my love.

*K. Hen.* And you will swear me over-lord of all  
The womanhood  
That Time's good sword shall win for you ?

*Ros.* Ay, all.  
How should I know  
That I am girl, or, if you'll have it so,  
With this May-moon rise woman, save for love ?

*K. Hen.* The moon [*wrapping her in his cloak*]  
For touching this white shoulder must be banned !  
Let's to the deeper woods ! The nightingale !  
Dost hear that urgent note ?—a thorny sigh,  
A prick sets bliss to bleed, desire too sharp  
For tolerance—a pang.

*Ros.* I'm curious  
To learn what happens to the nightingales  
At daybreak. Henry, do their gurgling throats  
Stop like a torrent when it turns to rest  
Under green leaves ?

*K. Hen.* In the nest all grows still.  
I've built a fair bower-nest for thee, my bird,  
And there we'll mate.  
Come, 'tis a little deeper in the wood,  
And nearer to its heart.

*Ros.* I love you here

Where the beech is and the sun. I will not go  
Where I have never loved you.

*K. Hen.*

Ha! Not come?

Who is it orders? God, with those clasped hands  
She's forging mail to keep me from her heart.  
You love me in the woods!—a summer love!  
You shall love me in the winter, in the world,  
Where'er I will; what pain I put you to.  
You shall not choose. Is this your loyalty?  
And you'll not go

*Where you have never loved me!* In the camp,  
The palace, I can find no spot of life  
Where I have "never loved." Where'er I am  
Is Love—the famished child you will not feed.  
Come, come! Ah, Rose, you cannot know the pain!

. . . If you'll not come,  
I'll burn the bower, ride off to the wars,  
Make havoc till I perish.

*Ros.*

It fulfils

My dream.—You shut me in a prison close—

\* \* \* \* \*

Henry, I cannot leave you; lead me home. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V.—*Another part of the Wood. Moonlight. Enter  
Margery.*

*Mar.* O moon, I love to be afraid, an' see  
The elder-boughs all white, an' feel alone



With my big fear of every bush. The fays  
 Will dance to-night, for all is blue and still ;  
 There's not a little wind runs from its hole  
 To be a mouse among the trees.—Good Lord !  
 There's the black yew I never pass, because  
 I know 'tis dreadful underneath—I'll run !  
 Yes, there's the stone ! Yes, yes—an' there are they  
 The honey-elves !

[*Lies, and watches the fairies dance and sing.*

*Fairies.* In the moony brake  
 When we laugh and wake,  
 And our dance begins,  
 Violets hang their chins  
 Fast asleep—  
 While we laugh and leap.

*Mar.* The little wingy circle spins about  
 So that I cannot see 'em in the gloom ;  
 They might be made o' spider's gossamer.

*Fairies.* Woodbine-leaves above,  
 Each a tiny dove,  
 Roost upon the bare  
 Winter stems, and there  
 Peaceful cling—  
 While we shout and sing.

*Mar.* They've jumped the bonfire glow-worm. Here  
 they come !

Soft ! They will dance upon my hair as moss,  
 And I'll not scratch my head for all their toes.

*Fairies.* On the rooty earth  
Ferns of April's birth,  
Brown and closely furled,  
Doze like squirrels curled  
Warm and still—  
While we frisk our fill.

*Mar.* Now I can see their scrimped kirtles green,  
And swinging beads of dew about their necks ;  
They've not the pretty caps o' Midsummer,  
Poor midges,—only cowslip-bells, o'er young,  
That fall at every jerk, an' dirty cups  
From acorns of last year.  
I'll make my tiny peaked bonnets red,  
And see if they will pick 'em from the twigs.

*Fairies.* Hark ! our ears have caught  
Sound of breath and snort  
Near our beechen-tree,  
Mixing carelessly !  
Sprites away !  
Fly as if 'twere day !

[*Exeunt.*

*Mar.* They're gone ! I heard a noise ! Oh, oh, oh, oh !  
If it should come from underneath the yew ! [*Faints.*  
[*Enter Wilfred, leading his horse.*]

*Wil.* By Cupid ! 'tis my nut-brown maid enacts  
The shrieking owl ! I swore I'd find her here,  
Watching for silly spirits of the night,  
That never come at all. My simpleton,  
My comely rustic fool, to be cajoled,  
The pleasant way of forcing childishness.

*Mar.* [*starting*]. Rosie!—Why, I'm not in bed!  
[*Discovering Wilfred*] Oh, Oh! [*sobs*]

*Mar.* Sir, . . . I think they skipt away . . .  
moment back.

*Mar.* You only see some primroses.

We win the city harlots ; but to-night  
I'm ineffectual.—[*Aloud*] 'Tis melancholy  
Watching for pixies dressed in flow'ry bits —  
Not much to see, if seen ; while in the town  
Are ladies trooping all in bodices  
Of scarlet, jewel-lighted, with their locks  
Caught in a golden web ; and there they dance  
With knights unarmed and rustling in silk.

*Mar.* It must be brave to be in town !

*Wil.*

This dress

Is poor—it wants an edge of gold ; the stuff  
Is coarsely woven. If you'd come to town,  
And let me love you, robes of red and white,  
With golden fleur-de-lis all over them,  
I'd give you, and a necklace of bright gold.

*Mar.* It must be brave in town !

*Wil.*

Oh, but it is !

*Mar.* I'd like to see it very much.

*Wil.*

And have

A pretty dress of red ?

*Mar.*

I've got a cloak

At home. And this is my old dress.

*Wil.*

Poor wench !

You'd like to have a necklace of bright gold ?

*Mar.* Yes, sir ; I've only got a string of eggs.

*Wil.* Kiss me ?

*Mar.*

They've told me to be coy with men.

*Wil.*

With foresters and peasants, not with knights ;

You should do all a gentleman could ask.

*Mar.* I'd rather not.

*Wil.*

Come, come !

You have not learnt respect, and if you'd have  
A silken bodice, I must have a kiss.

*Mar.* Silk !

*Wil.*

And with spangles on 't.—My bait has ta'en ;

The body's caught in raiment as a net.—

Kiss me ?

*Mar.* I've never kissed a man before.

*Wil.* Then try how nice it is. [*Kisses her.*]

*Mar.* I'd best go home.

*Wil.* Nay, but the scarlet and the linen fine,  
The broidery of wedded gems and gold,  
The silken vest? Will you forget them all?

*Mar.* I can't.

*Wil.* Then will you come to town with me?

*Mar.* Ye—s.

*Wil.* Or I'll go, and you be left to wear  
Coarse clothing all your life, and have no play  
But watching leaves or pixies at their dance.

*Mar.* I'll run home and put on my better frock.

*Wil.* No; for we'll have you straightway dressed in  
white

A-glow with lilies.

*Mar.* Lilies o' the vale?

*Wil.* Oh, something larger. There, another kiss.  
One, two—she cannot count them, so I'll take  
An unrestricted measure.—Come this way. [*Exeunt.*]

[*Re-enter Fairies.*]

*Fairies.* Silence! on the ground  
Set the toadstools round.  
Of these mortals twain  
We to talk will deign,  
Grave and wise,  
Till the morning rise.

SCENE VI.—*Without the Labyrinth. Morning. Enter King Henry and Rosamund.*

*K. Hen.* Sweet Love,

Here we must part.

[*Taking her hands.*

Oh, brave, unwedded hands, that wear the kiss  
Of troth-plight for their pledge—a pretty bond !  
You have the royal seal of a king's lips  
At your free service ever.

*Ros.*

I am glad

No woman ever spoke to me of love.

It's pure

Only from burning lips.

*K. Hen.* [*aside*].

Her innocence

Kept the flame golden ! [*Aloud*] I have taught you  
well ?

My bonnie wood-bird, when I'm at the wars,  
I'll lie in my tent and think of the sweet throat  
Of the nightingale that swells for me.

[*Kissing her throat.*] Again

You turn ? Home, sweeting, this is forwardness  
To stroke my curls and fondle me.  
We've done with parting, if you glisten so,  
Unpacking all your sweets before the eyes  
That must to fast.

*Ros.*

O Henry, could I lie

In the green sunshine and sing soft all day  
The words o' the lute !



The little wood-sorrel and strawberry leaves,  
I've smiled to see them twinkling with my tears,  
When I have cried for sound of horse's feet,  
And the woodpecker provoked me.

*K. Hen.*

What surprise

To find my lady in her midmost bower,  
Loosing from silken fillet, knot by knot,  
That hair that measures, as I well believe,  
My royal stature ! When you comb it out,  
As the rower from the sea strikes sudden light  
With his oar's motion, every crispèd tress  
Will shimmer into argent. I shall laugh  
To find you silver-haired. Now to my will.  
You've wedded a Plantagenet. Seven nights  
Keep watch in heaven. When your couch is touched  
With the first moonbeam, take it as a sign  
That night  
You lie not lonely.

*Ros.*

While I live alone

Let me be free to gossip with the woods.

*K. Hen.* My lady keeps her bower.

*Ros.*

What should you fear ?

*K. Hen.* Your father will be seeking you.

*Ros.*

My lord,

You would not banish me from sight of him,  
My fond old foster-father ? He'll ne'er know  
I slip away from him. I still must tend  
His gentle childishness, and to my state  
When the King rides his forests.

*K. Hen.* Were it my dearest hound that thus let  
creep

A minute 'twixt my word and bidding done —

*Ros.* I cannot leave my father. He'll not eat  
If I dress not his food, and Margery  
So wild and negligent. . . .

*K. Hen.* I'll order good Sir Topaz to procure  
[*Enter Margery.*

All comforts for old Michael ; trust me, Rose.

Sweetheart, once more farewell. [*Exit King.*

*Ros.* There's Margery ;  
She'll tell me of my father. What ! her cheeks  
Are peonies ; she looks . . . Where have you been ?  
Who tricked you in these gauds ?

*Mar.* [*dancing*]. A knight ! all gold  
To his horse's knees. It's splendid ! You're in white.  
How beautiful ! But, sister, I've a man  
Gave me these pearls, and called 'em mistletoe—  
A kiss for every one. He's taking me  
To London on a palfrey. [*Stopping before Rosamund.*

Rosamund,  
Though I'm a child, he's making love to me ;  
It's like you and the King.

*Ros.* The King ! O God !  
You've been asleep all night, at home ?

*Mar.* No, no—  
With Sir Wilfred, and he promised me  
A frock all blue, with stars, and made me laugh.  
He'll after me ; the palfrey had a stone

In 's foot, and while he pulled it out I peered,  
And something glistened—then I jumped down quick  
And saw . . . don't shudder. Rosie, do you live  
Inside? Why, it's a palace. He'll come soon.  
Just see, this scarf  
Is gayer than the kingcups.

*Ros. [aside].* A mere child  
Playing with fairies!

*Mar.* Past the cherry-trees  
We rode: the moon was like a candle held  
To the little slit of light down in our room!  
Rosie, I cried to kiss you once, and he—

*[Enter Sir Wilfred.]*

He's coming—held me firm, blew down my ear,  
“You think none naughty but yourself, you elf!  
Your sister can play pranks. She sleeps to-night  
In a palace with the King.” Oh, but it's fine!

*Ros. [aside].* How can I save her? *[Aloud.]* Child,  
leave gambolling,  
They want to steal and kill you. Take my hand,  
*[Catching her hand and turning to the labyrinth.]*  
Come, see the pretty palace.

*Sir Wil. [advancing].* Pardon me,  
That lady is *my* prize, if you're the king's.  
Your little foster-sister has an eye  
Of an enchanting wildness. In attire  
Becoming that brave skin. . . .

*Ros. [gathering Margery in her arms].* Sweet Margery!  
Oh, do not look at him. Love, hide your eyes

In my bosom ; hush ! [To Wilfred.

You shall not touch the child.

The King—his name shall shield her.

*Sir Wil.*

Ay,

You bear it proudly. You're his mistress—so !

Queen Elinor shall hear of this.

*Mar.* [looking up].

Rose, Rose !

Do you not want me go and see the streets,

And wear grand jewels ? I will stay with you.

Don't sob so 'gainst my heart.

*Ros.*

I'll keep the child. [To Margery.

Sister is lonely ; stay with her.

*Sir Wil.* [to Margery]. You little fool, d'you hear ?

I'll fetch the Queen.

She'll frighten you.

And when she sees your sister here, who keeps

The King away, she'll take her by the hair,

And bind it round her till it chokes.

*Mar.*

No, no !

She shall not come.

*Ros.*

You have betrayed the child.

God curse you for 't.

*Mar.*

Have I done wrong, dear Rose ?

*Sir Wil.* [to Rosamund]. Fair precedent

You've given my audacity. The thing

You call her *ruin* had been *triumph* if

The actress were yourself ; no more to her

Than rick of a trash goblin. [To Margery.] Margery,

You must with me ; and if you're very good,

I'll not blab of your sister. If you stay,  
I'll fetch the Queen  
To murder her by inches.

*Mar.* [*struggling from Rosamund*]. Murder Rose !  
I'll strike her in the face. [*To Rosamund.*] He is my man,  
And I *must* follow him ! Rose, you'll be safe,  
He'll not offend me. [*Kisses her.*]

*Ros.* [*clasping her, and kneeling to Sir Wilfred*]. For our  
Lady's sake,  
Leave this wild innocence to me.—  
I've sinned.

She's torn  
Her frock in the briars, and laughs.

*Mar.* [*struggling*]. I'll not with you,  
With my man ! [*Jumping into Wilfred's saddle.*]  
Good-bye. [*Exeunt Sir Wilfred and Margery*  
*waving her hands.*]

*Ros.* And I am bound to him,  
The King and my seducer ! Oh, he loves,—  
It is not so he loves me !—

Margery,  
He's hard and cruel ; Margery, come back !

\* \* \* \* \*

Nothing to see  
But a trout leap in the stream. [*Turns to the labyrinth.*]  
[*Enter Sir Topaz.*]

*Top.* Mercy ! if there are not folk about, and my  
lady outside the walls. Bless the pretty soul, she looks  
badly. There's been a summer shower on the two roses

of her face. My dear damozel, I must lead you back 'Tis a strict command I have that you never stray from the door. There's a little garden within, where is broom and what not. Nay, look not so down-hearted. I've planted sunflower and sweet basil against the season.

*Ros.* I'm so bewildered. Where in all this green Starts the way home?

*Top.* Straight to the door, straight to the door—that is your home. Permit [*takes her arm*].

*Ros.* And will you never let me out again?

*Top.* Nay, nay; you'll be very happy. And my dear monarch is so full of griefs, I'd rather lose a seat in heaven than put you in peril.

[*Exeunt.*]



## ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Winchester. A terrace. Enter Queen Elinor, Wilfred, Jose, and Beatrix.*

*Q. Elin.* When, when ?

*Wil.* Not yet have Time and Circumstance  
Engendered their love-child Occasion.  
Have patience, O my Queen !

*Q. Elin.* *Patience and Queen !*  
Thou fool, the words are mortal enemies,  
As much opposed as Strength and Impotence,  
Entreaty and Command. I am no queen  
Then, when I must be patient ; royalty  
Allows no pause between the will and deed.

*Wil.* Pardon !

*Beat.* Yet God is patient.

*Q. Elin.* What, my saint ?  
Patient ! God patient ! Does He ever pause ?  
Give me a poison-bowl to mix, a blade  
To try the edge of—something to prepare.

*Jose.* There's for your silver pious tongue !

*Beat.* We're told  
God's patient with our wickedness.

*Q. Elin.* What ! lags

In preparation?—puts away His wrath?  
 Takes ease, as you would bid me now? You fools!  
 He whets the hunger ere the sin be hatched  
 Of the dragon that will tear it in our sight.  
 He never waits!

*Jose* [*to Beat.*]. Why were you not a nun?

*Wil.* Because she's tender, and her shining self  
 She'd never make foul weather of in black.

*Jose.* Ha! ha!

*Beat.* For shame!

*Wil.* Nay, Mistress Beatrix,  
 What were my loss!

*Beat.* Then, sir, I'll take the veil.—

*Wil.* Of bridal lawn—ay, ay!

*Beat.* You have me, sir,  
 But you must learn to keep a sinless mouth;  
 I'd have my husband irreproachable.

*Q. Elin.* [*aside*]. To think of it!—at Woodstock!—  
 and a home!

He brought *me* to a place inherited;  
 For her he's built this palace.—Rosamund?

*Wil.* The name?  
 You have it right.

*Q. Elin.* And planned the building.—Walk!  
 Why should we stand? In pausing we grow cold.

[*They pace apart.*

[*Enter King Henry*].

*K. Hen.* Sons, sons! She'll dash the words against  
 her mouth,

As if to break 't to pieces. And she stirs  
 A troop of boys, with tricks of horsemanship  
 And set o' the lips that stamp her nuptial faith,  
 To mad rebellion. Would she murder them?  
 She is a desperate woman! Sick at heart  
 Of all her wrath, passing yon twines of rose,  
 My wont, I tore a handful of the flowers,  
 Black, splendid, half malignant as it seemed,  
 To throw into her lap,—a gift for queens—  
 My first to her, coiled sleeping on her couch.  
 When presently she woke, she took the flowers  
 And sobbed, "A happy dream!—the sweet warm  
 scent!—"

For the king kissed me close, and called me Rose;"  
 Then tossed them from her with a stormy hand.  
 I heard her singing her Provençal songs  
 For an hour afterwards. Can she suspect?  
 I dare not try to soften her. She smiles  
 At a deprecating word—as the sword smiles  
 In blades of finest temper. I must keep  
 My majesty.—What news? [*Enter Messenger.*]

*Mess.* A letter, sire,

From the third prince, your son.

*K. Hen.*

Ah! give it me. [*Reads.*]

Death-warrant to my heart!—

A call to Aquitaine. O Rosamund!

I'll bear the news myself. He asks my help.

[*To Mess.*] Hence, and be entertained.

[*Advances to Elinor.*] What! rebel too,

My tongue !—Read this.

*Q. Elin.*

News from the children ?

*K. Hen.*

Ay

Your progeny, in arms, war each with each,  
In most unnatural combat. Our chief son  
Presses back Richard to the ocean's point,  
Who prays for help we'll grant him speedily  
Whom favour you ?

*Q. Elin.*

Who bears thy name and face

Is my prime warrior.

*K. Hen.*

You'd greet me, how,

If I returned a conqueror ?

*Q. Elin.*

With shrieks,

A spectre's welcome.

*K. Hen.*

What, that 's darkly said.

I'll never slay the first-born of my loins  
For all his bitter disobedience.

I trust you with the guidance of my realm :  
Be ready for all chance ; leave not the gates  
Of Winchester. My Queen, the man in you  
Will keep my honour safe, while I chastise  
Our rebel offspring. You, good gentlemen,  
Keep revel as our land were not distraught.  
I may not tarry longer. Elinor,  
Pray, not as wife or mother ; pray for peace  
To our divided hearts. Farewell !

[*Exit.*

*Wil.*

'Tis come !

The moment's ripe——

*Q. Elin.*

For vengeance and the deed !

*Wil.* [*to Beat.*]. My fair, you shudder at the thought  
of blood.

We've work to do. Braid me that favour, sweet ;  
You promised, and I crave.

*Beat.* Nay, I'll to church. [*Exit.*]

*Wil.* And there we'll meet.—I only know one way  
To get the door unlocked.

*Q. Elin.* None but ourself  
Must murder her. Oh, I am blind with hate !  
You'll lead me by the hand ? I could not catch  
The thread o' the maze.

*Wil.* I say there is a way.  
Her foster-sister lives within my house,  
A common wench—but thus she'll serve our turn.  
She shall be taken to her father's hut—  
(He'll have her back ; they're grossly lenient,  
These peasants, in such matters)—which is near  
To Woodstock and the sylvan labyrinth.  
There shall she seek her sister, there grow dear  
To jovial Topaz in his lonely hours.  
And thus her voice will be our key ; to us  
He'll double bar the door.

[*To Jose*]. She does not mark.

[*To Elin.*]. Listen, at Woodstock I prepare the toils.

[*To Jose*]. Attend the Queen, till at a sign from me  
You draw her to the precincts of the maze.

Give her a gipsy's dress, and thus equipped  
Yourself, await the doing of the deed,  
With ready horses, just outside the wood.

I will attend her at the beldam's cot  
Down by the brook—you know it—to the right ;  
There shall the poison brew.

*Jose.* And how long hence ?

*Wil.* I fear me some few weeks, or even more,  
To make all straight. But stay you till I send.  
The king belike will not return for months.

*Jose.* I'll off to help you.

*Wil.* Look ! she's throttling her.

*Jose.* Ah, truly ! Speak and soothe. [*Exit.*]

*Wil.* Dear Queen, adieu.

Have patience ; you must feign a sickness.

*Q. Elin.* Yes !

Something at last *to do*.

*Wil.* I'll straight prepare

My piece of goods for travel. [*Exit.*]

*Q. Elin.* If he die

In France, two lovers will be gay in heaven,

And I on earth in hell. He must not die ;

I must watch work in him the injury.

When God would hurt, He turns the heart adrift

To cut itself alive among the tombs,

And sets not corpse to corpse ;—he must not die !



SCENE II.—*Winchester: outside a chapel; Margery sitting on a tombstone.*

*Mar.* He called me harlot—would not stay at home,  
But left the house just as the wretched moon  
Fainted away, and everything was wet.

*[Enter Wilfred and Beatrix.]*

'Tis he !

I'll go to—no, I cannot ; oh, good saints,  
I cannot ! Who's that he's a-talking to ?  
She's better dressed than me, an' white o' skin.  
Oh me !

*Wil. [to Beat.]* Why go to church so oft ?

*Beat.* Because, Sir Wilfred, 'tis the dormitory  
Of souls that find their pillow on sweet prayer.  
The want is frequent.

*Wil.* Marry ! while you kneel,  
Love has to play the monk.

*Beat.* Sir Wilfred, fie !  
I fear you're not religious.

*Wil.* I'm in love !

*Beat.* And love is half religion.

*Wil.* Lovely saint !

*Beat.* Oh fie, Sir Wilfred !

*Wil.* Lovely angel !

*Beat.* Peace

*Wil.* 'S death ! then lovely woman !

*Beat.* Nay, for shame,  
You're full of oaths.

*Wil.* Just stop them with a kiss.

*Beat.* Nay, not in public, by my modesty ;  
A girl is watching us !

*Wil.* Oh—ah ! the slut !  
Our marriage day will never come methinks.

*Beat.* It is Time's sluggard, as all glad days are  
That slowly from the curtained future rise,  
Unwilling to forsake the bed which Hope  
Has made with golden hands.

*Wil.* I'm for the bed  
Dressed by a grosser chamber-maid.

[*Exeunt.*

*Mar.* Alone ! alone ! I never felt alone  
I' the country ; there was something loving me  
In all the green and everywhere about ;  
But here I'm lonely—lonely—desolate.  
There is no love for me in all the men,  
Nor in the streets they make. I cannot cry  
Because of loneliness, because——

[*Enter Jose.*]

*Jose.* Ho, wench !  
You want another woer. Look at me !  
What say you, Mopsy ?

*Mar.* Go away.

*Jose.* Not yet.  
Why, hem ! you're resting on a slab that boasts  
The unexampled virtue of its dame ;

She'll break it open with her finger-point,  
And mark you for perdition.

*Mar.* Oh, good sir,  
I cannot read [*rising*].

*Jose.* Nay, never spoil the joke ;  
Let's see your purse ; your finery is dashed.

*Mar.* No, no !

*Jose.* Come, goose-cap, out with it.

*Mar.* [*beginning to cry*]. 'Tis here—keep it. The  
fairies . . . I . . . [*In bringing the purse out a bit  
of red stuff appears.*]

*Jose.* Well, and what of them ?

*Mar.* The little cap . . . I began it . . . this  
this . . . O' my old red skirt . . . I . . .  
an' the little bodies . . . why, why . . .  
they've harebells n—ow [*sobs on her knees*].

*Jose.* The dolt ! Look here ! 'tis gold, not silver,  
mind.

Some weighty pieces. Come !

*Mar.* I hate you !

*Jose.* Strong !

[*Re-enter Wilfred.*]

*Wil.* Margie, old girl ! Ho ! brother, get away !  
[*Aside.*] She's yours hereafter. Come to me anon.

*Jose* [*To Mar.*]. God bless you ! [*Exit Jose.*]

*Wil.* Jewel, I have merry news.  
These cheeks are wan and dinted, ask for winds  
That blow across the fields. My turtle-dove,  
We'll to your home.

*Mar.* Is it to cast me off  
Because you take . . . a wife?

*Wil.* Ha, jealousy!  
Why, baggage, bless your innocence, we wed  
Because we must. A wife, a wife! Forsooth!  
We look more sweet on minions such as you,  
Than on our proper spouses. Thus it is:  
I ride perforce to Oxford, and you wait  
The space of some few days till I return.  
At Woodstock there's a jolly squire who keeps  
Your foster-sister's bower. Margery,  
Seek him. His honest talk will spend the time  
hang heavy as a miser's purse.  
We'll start at dawn.

*Mar.* You'll bring me back again?  
It is so still down there.

*Wil.* Nay, never fear.  
Brave wench, a kiss! And now come home with me.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*Winchester: An ante-room to the Queen's chamber. Curtain before the door. Enter maidens.*

*1st Maid.* Since Lammas-tide  
Autumn hath lain about the doomèd woods.  
To-night she storms them, battering the leaves,  
From many a stricken oak.

*2nd Maid.* And the wind waves  
The curtain to and fro.

*3rd Maid.* Is death behind? I know not which to  
fear,

The ruffling night or the dead quietness  
Within.

*2nd Maid.* I'd like to peep.

*3rd Maid.* Thou dar'st not; none

Enter save Beatrix.

*2nd Maid.* A cunning leech!

*3rd Maid.* Yet *she*

Is colourless, and whimpers, "Pray for us!" [*Thunder.*

*2nd Maid.* Hear you that?

Should the king be afloat?

*1st Maid.* Impossible!

His stoutest vessel cannot climb such waves,

As must make mountain-country of the sea

Betwixt his lands.

*2nd Maid.* 'Twas pity that the tales

From Holy Land should keep him in the town

After farewell.

*3rd Maid.* They say it fretted him.

*2nd Maid.* Peace, peace! The curtain moves.

[*Enter Beatrix.*]

*All.* How fares the Queen?

*Beat.* She cannot sleep. Is the King still detained?

*1st Maid.* He left five hours ago.

*Beat.* A fearful night!

I cannot calm the Queen. Fetch me Sir Jose,

He'll aid me; then to bed!

*1st Maid.* God lay the storm! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*Woodstock : Forester's hut.*

[*Michael, laying faggots together for a fire.*]

*Mich.* There's no wench<sup>s</sup>. I can lay the faggots, and maybe stir a little flame. . . . It's growing dark, . . . one might almost as well be underground ; it's cold, and nothing to smile at. There's no wench<sup>s</sup>, and that means no broth. A dry crust's enough, without a child to break one's bread in the bowl and spice it. To think she could have done it—her—as white as the lily on the pond. But her mother was a slippery thing. Had she been as honest as fair, I had never had the hiding of her babe. And Sir Topaz must come with an air ; how Blanche barked at him ! “ The Lady Rosamund was well ; the king had taken her under his protection ; had I a message for her ? ” Well, I told him to mark how the dogs yelped at him, and be gone. The wood's green ; it won't kindle. . . . .

Mags was the faggot-gatherer, what a wench !  
 They'd not 'tice her to mischief ; she was shrewd ;  
 She milked the goat, and never lolled about ;  
 It's the lying on the grass that leads to sin,  
 Snapping at flies. I kept Mags at my side ;  
 She knew the pups from their birth ; she'd work to do  
 Feeding and training 'em. 'Twas a soft hand  
 Of Rose's, seemed to make you warm at once  
 The way she led you in. She didn't talk ;  
 And it's a sign of honesty to talk.  
 That sighing when there's nothing wrong looks ill  
 Mag's eyes were wet two days for Blackberry ;



Rose stroked my head—she didn't care for the cow ;  
She hadn't got the sense ; but Margery—  
A child to lean on that ! just like yourself,  
With a temper you'd grown used to—knew the rash  
At sight, like measles, and could tackle it.  
Mags, Mags, what have they done with ye, my wench ?  
The fire won't burn ; I'll just lie down a bit.  
No, no ; I'll try again  
To stir a flame. She may have lost her way,  
And look for the red light about the door.  
I'll try.

*Mar.* [*entering*]. Dear father !

*Mich.* [*hugging Margery*]. Hussy, clear the hearth !  
Where have you been, you naughty girl ? Oh, stop . . .  
It takes my breath. . . . You wait  
Till after supper, and I'll beat you blue  
For straying in the woods. . . . Just tell me all.

*Wil.* [*advancing*]. I found your daughter, Michael,  
in the glade

Seven nights ago, as I was riding back  
To town, in haste, on business of the King's.  
I put her on my horse, and kept her safe  
In charge of gentle ladies, till to-night,  
When I restore her to you with the prayer  
You will not let her play among the elves.  
The woods are dense, her childish brain confused,  
And harm may happen.

*Mich.* Thank you, sir.

[*To Margery.*] Mags, since you've been away

I've had no broth. Don't cry so ; never mind !  
 Look in my face ! You must have seen fine folks,  
 Fine ladies, in the city, were they kind ?

*Mar.* So kind ! . . . O Wilfred, will you go away ?

*Mich.* You have not combed your hair—a ragged face !  
 How is it you don't ask for *her* : “Where's Rose ?”

*Mar.* O father, Rosie's safe ; she's with the King,  
 She'll be a lady ; I may go sometimes  
 And see her.

*Mich.* This is not your woollen gown.

*Wil.* Kind ladies gave it her.

*Mar.* A lie, a lie !

No ladies gave it me, it was yourself.

Father, he promised me

Fine clothes to make me wicked. Why, there's Blanche.

Blanche, Blanche, you'll never know the difference.

*She* smells too at my frock.

[*Jumping down and  
 caressing the dog.*]

*Mich.* [*to Wilfred*]. You took the hound  
 I had no mind to part with ; you took her  
 And spoilt her for my use. I had two maids  
 At my fireside—good girls,  
 And when I dozed at nights and woke again  
 They seemed like angels watching me. Ah, Lord !  
 I shall dream now of fiends. If I could lay  
 My hands on her ! Come here, now !

*Mar.* [*springing to him*]. Let me stay ;  
 I dare not go with him. . . . A blow ! . . . I  
 thought

'Twas wicked men who loved you struck like that.  
Speak to me.

*Mich.* Curse you. . . .

*Wil.* He has lost his wits.

Don't listen to him. Had you held your tongue,  
All had gone well. Here, call your dog and come.

*Mar.* [*to Wilfred*]. No ; I'll leave Blanche with father.

[*To Michael.*] Every day

I'll bring you faggots, lay them at the door.

I do not want to stay ; it's spoiled at home.

\* \* \* \* \*

How still my father looks. . . . Oh see, he sobs !

Let me go back to him. [*Struggling to escape from*  
*Sir Wilfred.*

*Wilfred.* He'll strike you dead.

There now, you'll see !

*Mar.* [*breaking from Wilfred*]. He's dead ; he cannot  
strike.

The sweet grey hair !

Don't snuff so, Blanche. It's better to be dead ;

It's safe, like the high shelf I used to climb,

Up out of reach. . . . How very thin

His hands are !

*Wilfred.* Poor Brownie ! There, cheer up ! Learn  
not to blab,

And you shall live with Rosamund. Come, now,

Kiss me ; be good.

*Mar.* Take me to Rosamund [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.—*Within the Labyrinth Enter Rosamund  
and Sir Topaz.*

*Ros.* He'd not have died . . .

*Top.* I doubt it. I'm an old man myself. When death once claps you by the hand, you must go. Think not of that; think of the King! Belike he's coming through wind and rain.

*Ros.* Fie on me, fie! Is not my father dead? And Margery . . . and yet the thing I want . . . Is the wind fluttering through the trees? . . .

*Top.* 'Tis a wild night, but the wind cannot find you—so warm and close. Yet there's comfort; *one can!* The king will be here to-night. And I've taught you to play on the lute, and made you the lady you are—his very queen and idol!

*Ros.* He has a queen in Winchester.

*Top.* Now don't wring your hands till they're like the flowers o' bindweed at the droop o' the day. Sit, sit—and I'll tell you of Dame Elinor. She's a woman of black eye and blacker soul—that overflows in her births—her children benighted from all goodness. She's a snake about the poor king's heart, and they the brood of vipers that sting it within.

*Ros.* And he has never wronged her that she knows.

*Top.* Nay, nay, *never*. All the hurt is with him. Oh, Lady Rosamund! I've known him stout and red,

with face like a lamp and smiles that came out a'doors as if from home, and not from a dungeon. It's a woman's doing, the change. But you'll shake your tears off and comfort him. Keep your pretty face dry till he tells you of his broken heart. You may cry then. Why, I warrant he's here ; I must to the bolts now. Hark !

[*Exit Topaz.*]

*Ros.* Yes.—The door moves ; I hear the wind—  
Oh, I'm his leman, and I know not how  
Bad women feel ; I cannot act the part.  
I am his Lady and his Love ; it were  
A mistress's part to meet him with reproach.  
I'll be a rose for fragrance, not for thorn.  
Alas ! when we were lovers, I ne'er asked  
What mood my love would like ! He's coming ! . . .

[*Enter King Henry.*]

*K. Hen.* Rose !

*Ros.* O sweet, my lord !  
You're sick and weary. Keep the cloudy brow.  
Let us be sad together ; I've heard say  
Green herbs are simple remedies, and so  
There may be cure in Rosamund for ills  
She wots not of. You're come to say *Farewell* !  
I'll bear it, love.

*K. Hen.* God's truth, a Royal Rose !  
Though my young vultures famish for my blood,  
What matter ! if my little Woodstock dove  
Coo for her missing mate in widowhood  
That tells where love lies bleeding.



*Ros.*

Nay, not so.

I'll with you to the wars.

*K. Hen.*

My doughty Love !

In the field's disposition, womanhood

Is best in the rear. The soldier must not see

In front the thing he loves ; it would perplex ;

Imagination of it nerves his hand.

You must not to the field—but day and night

You may besiege the skiey citadel ;

I will appoint you captain in that war.

To arms, sweet lips, put off your peaceful use

Of softest kisses, and in prayerful mail

Equip you. But not yet. I'll keep this mouth

That flowers against my cheek for purposes

Most womanly. Shall women fast and pray ?

Oh, never in Love's sight ; it is contempt

Of his High Majesty. A fearfulness

Possesses me that here you are not safe.

I'll hide you deeper, you sweet-smelling Rose,

For safety with my treasures ; you shall have

The custody of my imperilled crown.

*Ros.* Think not of me—but you, my dearest lord,

Give me your griefs to think of when you're gone ;

They're dearer than your crown. You go to war . . .

*K. Hen.* With my own blood ; and Elinor——*Ros.* I would not see

Dame Elinor . . . not look

On that which bore you rebels.

*K. Hen.*

Ay, the boy



Who made me father would unmake me king.

*Ros.* May Heaven dishonour him !

*K. Hen.* A royal lad !

So princely ! I have put the crown on 's head,  
And smiled to see his brow confer a grace  
On the gold bauble. Be he covetous  
Of my grave, that territory shall be his ;  
He will annex it briefly.

*Ros.* Give me leave

To dress my father's grave. I've played the part  
You feel the stabbing hurt of. . . .

*K. Hen.* When I'm dead

Haply the boy will grieve. Rose, have you lost  
Your foster-father ?

*Ros.* He died daughterless.

I hate your rebel son ! Go, strike him dead.  
There is a grave  
Where I will put my hand in Memory's,  
Listen her tales and bear the childishness  
That doth so oft repeat.

*K. Hen.* I was mistaken babbling of my boy  
As *you* had been his mother.

*Ros.* Rosamund

Could not have borne a traitor.

*K. Hen.* Ah, my sweet !

If you had borne him, Henry's very self—  
The tiny portrait traced in flesh, with all  
A woman's delicate imaginings,  
Would have been dearer than the King, because

It was the King and Love and Rosamund.  
 Let us not wrangle : lovers wrangle thus,  
 Young lovers, who can kiss again next day.  
 We're parting ; one of us,  
 I think, will see the other once again.

*Ros.* God help me ! . . .

*K. Hen.* Oh, parting is the mirror in Death's hand,  
 Reflex of that immitigable face  
 Whose glance for ever sunders !

*Ros.* Dear, my lord,  
 There are some thoughts  
 That through this stormy weather of my sou  
 Cannot now travel toward you. Fare you well !

*K. Hen.* What ! Lightning in those eyes ! A long,  
 long rain  
 Follows such storms ! Farewell ! [*Excunt*

SCENE VI.—*Without the Labyrinth.*

[*Enter Margery.*]

*Mar.* The country makes me shy—so shy ! The trees  
 O' the forest seem to stand aloof—straight up,  
 An' ask respect, like gentle folk in town.  
 An' then . . . the flowers, somehow, are not kind ;  
 They only look at me . . . the marigolds !  
 But they are in the gardens. . . . Yet I've stopped  
 At every wild flower, . . . an' they only look.  
 We were such cronies ! Oh, it frightens me !

This is the door ; I'll very softly rap,  
Lest she should hear. I would not for the world  
Catch sight of her. . . . She would be haughty too.

[*Knocks.*

*Top.* [*within*]. Who's there? who's there? Master the  
Wind, ay?—that's put a glove on his noisy hand to make  
a fool of me? [*Looking through a window and then  
opening.*] Bless us !

*Mar.* Your honour——

*Top.* Indeed, good maiden, what would you?

*Mar.* A basket for the lady—whortleberries ;  
I gathered 'em this morning i' the dew ;  
An' if you'd give——

*Top.* Very pretty, very pretty ! A fresh gift, but bad  
for the teeth, assuredly bad. Ho ! ho ! you've the sweet  
soot on your lips.

*Mar.* 'Tis from my fingers, for I like them not.  
But Ro— I thought . . .

*Top.* A homely fruit ! and you've set the sprigs about  
like nature. Well done ! And pray where do you live,  
my pretty virgin, eh?

*Mar.* With Mother Greene.

*Top.* Odzookers ! With Ellen Greene, the witch ?  
a good girl like you ! Why, she's got a black kitten  
that sucks her under the ear ; and they say—mercy on  
us !—'tis a devil.

*Mar.* Oh, sir, but I have never seen it suck.  
It sits upon her shoulders with large eyes  
As yellow as the stars.

*Top.* 'Tis Lucifer.

*Mar.* She calls it Pretty.

*Top.* My child—tut, tut! Why do you live in her sty? Bless my heart! Her company's vile.

*Mar.* I have been left with her, and dare not go.  
It's better i' the day.

But, oh! the dreadful night! I lie an' quake  
To hear the purrs and chuckles i' the dark,  
Or see the embers spring as green as wheat  
About a hellish pot! the room grows big  
And like a church at evening.

*Top.* Oh, carry trefoil and pray, *Ave Mary!* That's a safe prayer. Rove the woods and be merry. 'Tis lonely hereabouts; but never fear! Maids have a watch. Keep at large, and come at your will to me. I've a cup inside, and a bit of honest talk will keep you from further witchcraft. Little sorceress! you've learnt the art as long as it's white and holy. Oh, oh! You set that gay bonnet like a sweet pea—all flaps. Did Mother Greene teach the charm? Nay, I see! A scholar to your own lesson, and very right! Nature has a pretty way of teaching girls. Why, my lady—bless you! she puts a flower on her bosom as if to grow. Hist! that's her voice! Bring what the woods yield at your will. I'll give the berries to my lady. God be wi' you, lass!  
[*Exit.*]

*Mar.* It's like old times.  
He's natural, and does not seem to know,  
As the flowers do, and all the men in town.  
[*Exit.*]

SCENE VII.—*Woodstock: Witch's cottage. Enter Wilfred and Ellen Greene.*

*Wil.* It's getting late.

*Greene.* An' full o' bats an' owls.

*Wil.* Your time.

*Greene.* 'Tis true, but later of an eve  
The fire is making yonder !

[*Goes apart.*

*Wil.* Margie's gone

To catch old Topaz in her artless net  
Of prattle ! 'Twas by very providence  
I visited the silly chuck at last.  
So many days and she had never moved  
One step toward the fulfilment of my plan.  
The hussy tires me with her drooping ways,  
The little Autumn ! She's dispiriting,  
And makes me an old sinner with her sighs  
And yellow tinct. If Jose can make her dance,  
Twill be as the north wind, by savage play.  
What tall, gaunt woman's that across the path !  
A wolf, a prowling creature ? Ah, the Queen !  
She has no patience.

*Q. Elin.* Take me to the maze.

See here the fire-tipped blade !

*Wil.* Nay, you've mistook

The time ; our thread is Margery's young voice ;



E'en now she's making friends with the old man.  
To-morrow night——

*Greene* [*advancing*]. Eh, are there two of us?  
Pardie, there's magic in the hem of the robe.  
Good faith ! I tremble at her !

*Wil.* Goodie, here !  
She needs a cup—the poison I bespoke—  
Against to-morrow eve.

*Greene.* I've been to pluck  
The berries. Lack-a-day ! I only played  
With wonders—for a poor soul must not die !  
I frightened the young girls and got their pence.  
Why, sir, that lass of yours, this blessed eve  
She'll have a bath o' dew beneath the moon,  
To comfort her.

*Wil.* Humph ! devilish penitence !

*Greene.* But, Lord ! I ne'er have sold me to the  
fiend ;  
Belike he's come to fetch me. Don't ye go.  
It must be secret.—Kindly stay about,  
Good sir.

*Q. Elin.* I cannot bide another night.  
My brain grows hot ; 'twill scorch my sense. The king  
Returns a conqueror. She'll crown him—she !  
Get access quickly. Ah, I fear my hand  
Can scarce strike steady. Get the poison mixed ;  
My will is firm, and I can force her drink.  
Sir Wilfred, there's a heart to stop, ere night ;  
The king is landing.



*Wil.* I'll seek Margery ;  
Watch you the draught a-brewing. I'll return. [*Exit.*

[*Q. Elin. flings herself on a bench.*

*Greene.* Beyond me—quite beyond me—a blue spirit  
That's smelt at sulphur. My poor cat is grey.

Pretty ! . . . There's sort o' chains about the air.

Lor ! if I'm not afraid.

*Q. Elin.* To do my will ?

*Greene.* What is it ?

*Q. Elin.* To make death.

*Greene.* 'Twas once I sent  
A faithless lover pining to his doom.

An' thus : I pinched a candle to his shape,—

So like, it made ye start ; and by the fire

I kept it dropping.

*Q. Elin.* Fill your caldron—come !

*Greene.* I'm shredding vipers' flesh.

*Q. Elin.* I have a knife ;  
I'll help.

*Greene.* Is it a man you'd murder ?

*Q. Elin.* No ; a girl.

*Greene.* Bless us ! D'ye see that flying thing with  
blood

I' the trail of it—a shroud ! and at the breast——

*Q. Elin.* Old crazy brain . . . *her* ghost will  
comfort me.

*Greene.* Nay, to be haunted ! Lady, look ye here !  
There's safer ways.

I'll give ye this will make

Any one love ye, and be mad for ye ;

Take that . . .

*Q. Elin.* You can ?

Nay, nay, I must not be a fool ;—

Past that ! Henceforth on hatred I must feed.

To be hated more and more, and more to hate.

What's that in the pot ?

*Greene.*

It's henbane !

*Q. Elin.*

Wherefore cook

Your wretched broth ? This phial will suffice.

[*Snatching at phial.*]

*Greene.* Not that, not that ! It will not do the thing.

*Q. Elin.* All's ready ! . . . Ah, it presses inwardly,  
Like the full breast

Undrained by thirsty lips. I've borne the load

Of an unlonged-for heart ; it stifles less

Than the burthen of dammed hate !

[*Re-enter Wilfred with Margery.*]

*Mar.* Who's this ?

*Q. Elin.*

I am——

*Wil.*

Listen : this lady here

Is Rose's mother. She was lost, you know ;

Now she is come again. She'll get you Rose

Out of the maze. She wants to see her so ;

She can't be patient. Twenty years away !

*Mar.* Oh, she looks poor and hungry. I am glad  
Sir Topaz said I might come any hour.

*Wil.* Then you shall be our guide, and with your  
voice

Call the good gentleman to let us in.

*Q. Elin.* Give me this Rose, I say !

*Mar.* I do not think

She's gentle ; may be she will strike at Rose.

*Wil.* She's angry with the king, who shut her in.

*Q. Elin.* [*taking Margery firmly by the hand*]. Go straight ; I am her mother.

*Mar.* Oh, I feel

As there were thunder in her ; I'm afraid !

SCENE VIII.—*Labyrinth. Rosamund pacing the room.*  
*Clear moonlight.*

*Ros.* White moon, art thou the only visitant ?  
Thou look'st like death !

Dost glisten through the trees  
My Henry bows his plumes to in the gloom ?  
He comes to-night ; for good Sir Topaz said,  
" My lady, put you on the crimson gown  
The king had wrought for you, and ask no more,  
But trust an old man's word.  
And be you ready." It's a silver night ;  
I'll put me out apparel. How blood red  
Burn the dark folds ! I cannot put it on ;  
And yet I will. My lute ; what is't I want—  
God, or the King ?

[*Sings.*

Love doth never know  
Why it is beloved,

And to ask were treason ;  
 Let the wonder grow !  
 Were its hopes removed,  
 Were itself disproved  
 By cold reason,  
 In its happy season  
 Love would be beloved.

*[Laying down her lute.]*

No ; it hurts sharper. I must just sit down  
 On the edge of the bed, and comb my hair and wait—  
 It can't be long—until the tide of tears  
 Rises and fills  
 The cracked and parched channels of my heart.  
 I cannot think at all *[letting fall her hair]*. How beautiful  
 This gold made silver in the moonlight. What !  
 Would Heaven age me for my Love ? Let's look  
 In the mirror. Rosamund, you're worshipful.

*[Starting back.]* 'Tis thus,

Even thus, he swore that he should come to me.  
 His very words ! The prophecy's fulfilled,—  
 I'll comb my hair down to my very feet.  
 A step !—my heart, some patience. Henry, speak ;  
 Bid it take courage ! *[enter Elinor]* God, the Queen !

*Q. Elin.* The Queen, who'll give you access to your  
 God ;

The wife, who'll doom the leman. Elinor  
 Come to put bitter poison in the cup  
 The King drinks deep of. Never tremble so :

I'll do naught hastily. Give me your face  
 To lay between mine hands, and drink my fill  
 Of the rich beauty I must violate.  
 Let's look in your face ! Why, Death were yellow to  
 The blanch of your lips. Do not mistake me, girl,  
 I lay  
 Dagger and cup at leisure for your use ;  
 I will not harm you. [*Aside.*] What a curl o' the lash—  
 A lovely coast-line to the hidden realm  
 Of the eyes.—Have you thought of me these many days?  
 Queen, wife, and mother, and the thing you are.  
 Old age is heir  
 Apparent to the majesty of Death,  
 And thought of the impending royalty  
 Softens the manners, and should awe the heart  
 Of youth—that churl of nature !

*Ros.* I'll not stay  
 For any prayers ; only remove the siege  
 Of your eyes from off my soul. I will repay  
 The debt [*stabbing herself*]. This blood—  
 An earnest of the red gold from my heart—  
 Take it . . . and do for my dead flesh the things  
 A mother would entreat. [*Dies.*]

*Q. Elin.* Sooth to my will, and she died prettily,  
 With tears on her cheek.

*Mar.* [*bursting in*]. Where's Rosamund ?

*Q. Elin.* A play at hide and seek here in the maze.  
 Warm !—at my feet.

*Mar.* You've killed my sister ; you're a murderess ;



And Sir Topaz murdered ! Oh, he died so slow,  
I could not leave him. Rose !

*Wil.* [*entering*]. My Queen, to horse !  
I hear

The King's horn in the woods. The parchment's writ  
We'd make him reader of. Plantagenet  
Best spend his first wild fury on the dead.  
Quick, by this passage.

*Q. Elin.* Would that I were here  
To chronicle his face ! Give me your hand !  
This roof  
Will break my brow. I've made my lord  
A bridal bed—a royal recipe  
For slighted wives. In very sooth the neigh  
Of his horse ! All's ready for him. [*Exit.*]

*Mar.* [*kneeling by Rosamund's corpse*]. Oh, what  
is it that sucks the air from the room ? An' I dare  
not go back, for the sweet old man breathed hard.  
It's worse than the dark, and it stares so. I never  
minded Rose looking. . . . They use coin. I've  
got some pieces of the silver left. I'll do it before I'm  
wild. But I shouldn't like the money there when I die.  
No. My hand. She's looking softer now. She hadn't  
seen the Prince Jesus before ! 'Tis a great way above  
[*raising her head at the sound of footsteps*]. O Rose,  
Rose ! Now I'll see what they do when we're dead who  
say fine things to us.

*Wil.* [*re-entering*]. You little fool !  
Come out ; did I not bid you follow ? Leave



You here for witness, sooth ! Gag up your mouth.

Come [*pausing before Rosamund*].

Oh, a royal morsel !

[*Margery stabs him.*]

*Mar.* 'Twas the look

He gave

At Rosamund's white breast. I'm used to it.

He may look so at me ! It trickles down—

The blood on his cheeks—and clots his curly hair,

The big black curls. I can't have hurt him much !

Wilfred ! I love him, love him ; be alive,

And strike and curse me. I've so swart a skin,

The yellow bruises hardly show ; but he—

He's growing deadly white.

*Wil.* [*aside*].

A wench's thrust,

And mortal ! Little drab !

She'll do what I tell her, though. [*Aloud.*] I'll have you  
hanged,

Do you hear, before the city ? Men will hoot

And jeer at you ; and say, "A slut like that,

To lay her hands upon a gentleman !"

The king will have you hanged tight by your neck,

Do you hear ? till you are dead.

*Mar.*

Hush, hush, hush, hush !

Don't bleed so fast,

Wilfred ! Oh, kill me first, I can't be hanged ;

Have you not strength to kill me ?

*Wil.*

Reach that bowl.

[*She drinks.*]

Don't stagger here to die ; go further off !

*Mar.* Oh, kiss me! . . . Do not die! . . . It's horrible,  
The cold inside.

*Wil.* She's fallen in a heap. *[Enter King.]*

My brain's still sick  
From loss of blood, or here's a spectre king!  
How hoary pale!

*[The King enters staggering; stands silent before Rosamund's corpse.]*

*King.* Before the funeral the eyes are buried.  
Thy lips—already is the tender mouth  
A rosy marble to the memory  
Of all past kisses. Lovely portraiture!  
That young Desire beholding ages slow,  
And turns from with the dull pace of regret.  
Her lute—O God! there's life about the strings;  
Her spirit's touched it. *[Looking round discovers Wilfred.]*

*Wil.* *[to Margery, who groans].* Peace!

*King* *[going to Wilfred].* Confess your lips, and for  
your soul I'll pray  
That God may damn it deeper every hour.  
Unkennel!

*Wil.* Sire, that child,  
Suspecting me of Elinor's base deed  
(That's the Queen's scarf caught in your lady's dress),  
Struck at me with the yet warm-blooded sword;  
Now end.

*Mar.* Stop, stop!  
This gentleman  
Is kind to me, he never did me harm.

'Twas the tall lady with the knife . . . and this  
[*lifting the poison bowl*].

Don't hang me, sir ; if you'll wait a bit, I'll die.

I drunk it off

As he told me. Pretty, pretty Rosamund,

I'd like

To have seen her crowned. Give her a handsome tomb

In the church, and bury me

Out in the grass. I'm but a common girl,

And she's a lady.

[*Dies.*]

*Wil.*

You've your paramour

To answer for ; I mine. I killed that wench

For slashing at me !

Like enough

Your lady rent her body at command

Of majesty ; what will not ladies do

For monarch's pleasure,—eh ?

*King.*

What lips God sets

To his chalice-cups of love ! What drink

He gives foul mouths ! Is there comparison

Betwixt our deeds ? From this slain innocence

I wince not ; for I worshipped. You—I swear

By the lost childhood of that cheek—*defiled*.

*Wil.* We had our pleasure the forbidden way,

Each after his own fashion. For the rest,

I bleed to death ; it's painless.

*King.*

You shall have

A leech, a cunning one. My men shall bear

Your body in a litter to your love,

With word from me how honourable your hurt ;  
And if she spurn you from her door, 'tis well ;  
Or if she tend you with cold eyes. [*Wilfred swoons.*] He  
swoons.

[*Turning to Rosamund.*] Heaven favours me, to give my  
Love

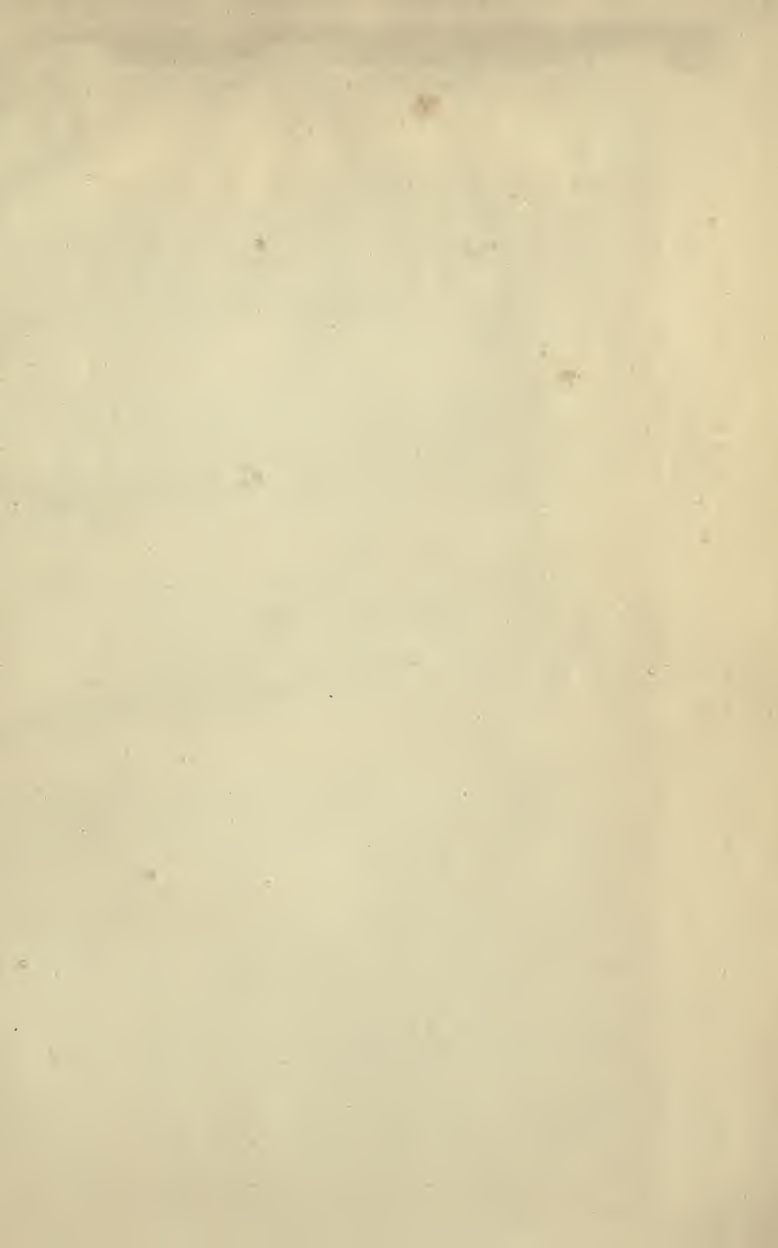
A private audience. They have pulled about  
Our bower, sweet Rose ; but there's a holy spot  
At Goddeshill, where, 'mid the sisterhood  
Of blessed nuns, I'll rear a stately shrine. . . .

What need ? . . . Death's labyrinth  
None threads. Ah, Rosa Mundi ! thou  
That wert to the king a tender sweet-brier rose,  
They've shed thy petals ; all thy balmy leaves  
Lie crushed against my heart. And what regret ?  
Without thee I had plunged for solitude  
I' the murk of hell ; and without me, my Life,  
Thy spirit had ne'er worn love's purple robes.

Let's cover thee [*Wilfred stirs.*  
From this base sight,—(My Sweet, how well thou know'st  
'Tis the first time

Lust hath breathed near thee !) cover thee, until,  
'Fore God and all His glistening righteousness,  
I shall re-claim thee, body, ay, and soul.





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